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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**HIZB UT-TAHRIR: A THREAT BEHIND A LEGAL
FAÇADE?**

by

Frank Schneider

June 2006

Thesis Advisor:
Second Reader:

Vali Nasr
James Russell

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HIZB UT-TAHRIR: A THREAT BEHIND A LEGAL FAÇADE?

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
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ABSTRACT

Hizb ut-Tahrir is a transnational Islamic fundamentalist group that operates in more than forty countries with main emphasis in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. The group claims to be a political party that proceeds with non-violent means and whose ideology is Islam. Its objectives are strictly political, and its main goal is to topple an existing regime to resurrect the caliphate with structures and conditions similar to the ones of early seventh-century (C.E.) Islam. The proposed Islamic state will be responsible for transforming society in a united Ummah, and for spreading the word of Islam throughout the world. Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) rejects the modern, secular state structures and democracy as something “man-made,” humanly derived and “un-Islamic,” and therefore, does not participate in any secular electoral process. However, HT does not reject modern technology and its advantages.

This research will focus on Hizb ut-Tahrir, its objectives, and its preferences as the group adjust its strategies according to the political environment in which it is embedded. The thesis will investigate how HT often uses a legal framework to spread its Islamist ideology and how this multifaceted phenomenon is context specific. The conclusion will address policy recommendations that reflect area- and context-related specifics with a special focus on the group’s major threat—its ideology.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
A.	THE THREAT OF ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM.....	1
B.	HIZB UT-TAHRIR AND THE RESURRECTION OF THE CALIPHATE.....	6
	1. History of the Islamic Caliphate.....	6
	2. The Vision of Hizb ut-Tahrir	7
C.	ARGUMENTS AND RESEARCH STRUCTURE	10
II.	HISTORICAL BACKGROUND HIZB UT-TAHRIR.....	13
A.	MIDDLE EAST.....	13
	1. A Complex and Demanding Political Environment	13
	2. Last Generation Developments in the Main Emphasis Areas	16
B.	EUROPE.....	18
	1. The Open Playground.....	18
	2. Germany	19
	3. Great Britain	20
C.	CENTRAL ASIA	23
	1. Central Asia.....	23
	2. South Asia	25
	a. <i>Presence in Bangladesh</i>	26
	b. <i>Pakistan</i>	28
III.	THE WAY TO SUCCESS.....	29
A.	HIZB UT-TAHRIR’S IDEOLOGY	29
B.	THE CALIPHATE	31
	1. Caliphate Structure	31
	2. The Constitution for an Islamic State	34
C.	HIZB UT-TAHRIR’S METHODOLOGY	36
D.	GROUP STRUCTURE AND MEMBERSHIP	39
	1. Party Structure.....	39
	2. Recruiting Structure and Membership.....	40
IV.	JIHAD.....	45
A.	HISTORICAL APPROACH TO JIHAD	45
	1. The Early Centuries of Islam.....	46
	2. Muslim or Muslim? A Question of Quality	51
	3. Islam – A Matter of Purity?	52
	4. The Pioneers of Islamic Revival.....	53
B.	HIZB UT-TAHRIR AND JIHAD.....	56
	1. Hizb ut-Tahrir and Jihad	56
V.	THE STATUS QUO	63
A.	CURRENT INTERACTION WITH REGIONAL POLICIES.....	63

1.	Middle East.....	63
2.	Europe.....	65
3.	Asia	68
B.	THE WAY AHEAD.....	70
1.	The Application of the Strategic Choice Method.....	70
2.	Proscription and Its Implications	74
VI.	CONCLUSION	75
A.	RESEARCH SUMMARY	75
B.	THREAT ASSESSMENT	77
C.	POLICY IMPLICATIONS.....	82
	LIST OF REFERENCES.....	87
	INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	91

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Caliphate Structure.....	31
Figure 2.	The Evolutionary Process of Jihad Interpretations	62

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. THE THREAT OF ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM

Islamic fundamentalism has been an ongoing threat for the past five decades, expanding from its origin in the Middle East. Its idea and concept was born in the midst of a turbulent time, a time in which European colonialism came to an official end and a new era of Arab independence began. New ideologies such as Arab nationalism, Pan-Arabism, and leftist socialism were to fill the vacuum in the search for Arab unity, freedom and economic success after the shackles of colonial dominance came loose. “Ba’thism” and “Nasserism” were two major idealistic political concepts that filled the gap and changed the whole Middle East from the 1950s on. However, the various Arab regimes that grew out of these ideologies proved to be repressive and militaristic, and in the end created more questions than answers, more problems than solutions, while the promised political and economic success was far from being achieved.

In reaction to these secular Arab ideologies, a new political ideology--based on Islam and the motto of a “return to the original message of Islam”—sprang forth. Thus was Islamic fundamentalism born, and from its birth it styled itself as nothing less than the savior of Muslims and harbinger for their success and glory. The vision of Islam as a political movement, with the objective of establishing an Islamic state ruled by Islamic “sharia” law was, and still is today, popular with many Shia and Sunni Islamic fundamentalists alike. They believe in Islam as an all-encompassing system for all political, economic, and social aspects of life. Fundamentalists are convinced that Islam as a complete political and societal system does hold the ultimate solution to the problems that have been created by secular ideologies. Entrenched ideologues such as Sayyid Qutb and Abu’l-A’la Mawdudi openly criticized both the existing regional regimes and the ongoing drive for hegemonial dominance by Western powers. Their idea of couching political objectives in religiously motivated arguments took off, and many Islamic movements and groups formed and spread far beyond the borders of the Middle East region.

Today, the political ideology based on Islamic fundamentalism has extended and survived in many forms and groups—in many regions. North Africa and Central, South and Southeast Asia, as well as Europe and other parts of the world, are dealing with the multifaceted phenomenon that roots its argument in an idealistic Islamic ideology that strictly opposes all secular notions. Islamic fundamentalism is not just an ideological, but often a physical, threat to modern nation-states. Militant violence and religiously motivated radical extremism are metastases of an as yet uncured cancer that still keeps threatening modern societies and governments throughout the world!

Islamic fundamentalism is a term that is as much discussed as it is misunderstood when issues and objectives of Islamic movements are analyzed. Topic-related expressions such as political Islam, Islamism, Salafism, Wahhabism, neo-fundamentalism, and even Jihadist-Salafism are used by various analysts, commentators and journalists today, often without the knowledge and clarification as to where the differences between these categories and sub-categories are. Admittedly, things are more complex and frontiers are more elusive than any type of block categorization would be able to demonstrate. Some of these ideologies and respective movements have built on one another, partially with overlapping goals, but at the same time with major differences and distinctions in extent and methodology. For the purpose of this thesis, certain commonalities, differences, and historical evolutions must be made first be made clear in order to understand where the over-five-decade-old Islamic movement of “*Hizb ut-Tahrir*” can be categorized, in order to make a threat analysis and solid projections for the group’s further development.¹

One of the overarching commonalities of all these different Islamic ideologies lies in the idealized view of early Islamic history. The “glory of the seventh century,” the golden times of the “rightly guided caliphs” or the “Rashidun Caliphate”—all these terms describe the success and power of early Islam between 622 C.E. and 654 C.E., the time span in which the Prophet Muhammad and his early companions (later his successors or caliphs) reigned over the first Islamic state. The vacuum between the Sasanian-Persian

¹ The group of Hizb ut-Tahrir is also known as Hizb al-Tahrir, Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami and Hizb al-Tahrir al-Islami, with the respective abbreviations HT, HaT, and HuT. For the purpose of this thesis, the group will be referred to as Hizb ut-Tahrir, or in abbreviated style as HT.

Empire in the East and the Byzantine Empire in the West had been filled with “Islam,” an all-encompassing system including religious, political, economic, and socio-cultural guidelines for followers of the faith. The different Islamic ideologies founded within the last two centuries share a strong desire to restore the original purity of the early times, while most of them believe in the strict interpretation of the Qur’an and the Sunna to help Muslims regain the strength and succession of early Islam. Salafism (to follow or precede [the Prophet Muhammad]), an ideology of the second half of the 19th century, emphasized the importance of the return to sharia law, and the pristine, pure, and orthodox form of Islam. It did not develop a single unified movement of its own, although a wide range of Muslims from the Middle East, Europe, Africa, and other major regions believe in that “backward-looking” idealistic view of Islam. Most of the earlier Salafi followers rejected violence as a means, while followers of the late 20th century considered using militant and violent actions a legitimate means in order to achieve their objectives. The “Saudi brand” of Salafism, widely known as Wahhabism, is more specific in its methodology and is extremely intolerant against any deviation from Islamic doctrine. Wahhabism rejects even centuries-old traditions such as Sufism (a spiritual and mystic tradition of Islam) and is known to proceed with violence against any deviant interpretation of Islam. Devastating conquests and occupations of Islamic sanctuaries and demolition of holy shrines and saints can be associated with Wahhabism of the 19th century. Wahhabism is ultra-orthodox and puritanical in its strict and single-minded interpretation of Islam. In the same vein, early fundamentalists of the 1950s, Islamists of the 1960s and 70s, and second-generation Islamists from the 1980s on often refer to the strict and literal interpretation of Islam as a harbinger of rekindled glory and success for Muslim societies.

The socio-political differences between the Islamic ideologies, on the other hand, are far more diffuse. Their roots can mainly be associated with the political conditions and historic evolution of the last century. The relative decline of the Ottoman empire in the late 19th century and the rise of the “West,” followed by the colonial dominance of the European powers through the late 19th and early 20th century, gave many Islamic rulers, thinkers, and ideologues reason to look into why Muslims became increasingly objects

rather than subjects of history.² The final fall of the last existing caliphate in 1924 and the birth of the state of Israel in 1948 were two decisive—but by far not the only—elements that inspired and infuriated Islamic revivalists of the last century.

Islamic modernists such as Sir Seyyed Ahmed Khan, Sayyid Jamal al-Din ‘al-Afghani’, and Muhammad Abduh were key persons in developing ideological structures that should “reconstruct, revive, and synthesize Islam in order to make Islam relevant to the needs, demands, and predicaments of those whom they considered the victims of modern civilization.”³ The re-creation of Islamic values in an ethical and socio-economic context, the elimination of *zulm* (*doing evil*) in Islamic societies, and a strict return to faith and religion were believed to bring salvation for the shattered and temporarily inferior Muslim societies. Islamic modernism was not an act of surrender to the superior Western culture, but rather was a reform that was to project the best of other societies into the Islamic ones. It did not completely reject the West, although it did reject the excesses such as colonialism, imperialism, and atheism. However, internal factors within Islam, like clerical leadership, sectarian conflicts, and the centuries-old discussion of the pros and cons of the closed “gates of *ijtihad*” limited Islam as a whole in adapting to modernity, according to Islamic modernists.⁴ Al-Afghani and Abduh argued for a modernization based on Islamic principles, achieved by re-opening the doors of *ijtihad*, and allowing the re-interpretation of the primary sources of Islam in light of changing circumstances. They both believed in adapting law and morality to modernity in order for Islam to progress.

The ideology of Islamic fundamentalism grew out of the modernist movement of the 1900s. However, a political agenda with political objectives was now combined with religion, resulting in an increasing instrumentalization of Islam for solely political purposes. “Purging Islam of all alien elements” best summarizes the critique of Islamic fundamentalists. Social, political, economic, and cultural changes had been addressed by

² Mohammed Ayyob, “Political Islam: Image and Reality,” *World Policy Journal*, Fall 2004, p. 2.

³ Ali Rahnama, ed., *Pioneers of Islamic Revival* (London, UK: Zed Books Ltd, 1994), p. 6.

⁴ Note: *Ijtihad* can be understood as independent legal reasoning, a process that had been abandoned ten centuries ago. Primary sources of Islam (i.e., the Qur’an and the sunna) were allowed to be interpreted; the opposite is the strict imitation (*taqlid*) of those sources. Some scholars argue that the closure of the gate of *ijtihad* prevents Islam from adapting to the ongoing process of historical evolution.

a lay religious, but educated and intellectual cadre. Key figures such as Hasan al-Banna, Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi, and Sayyid Qutb strived to liberate the Muslim societies and culture from their subjugation to both colonial rulers and repressive Arab governments, bringing them back to a status of equality. Some ideologues such as Sayyid Qutb argued that there is “no room for ijtihad...since no one is allowed to devise a law and say that it is according to the law of God unless it is declared that God is the Legislator,” and preferred strict taqlid, an imitation of the early times of Islam under the Prophet Muhammad and his immediate successors.⁵

A proposed implementation of sharia law, the goal of resurrecting a caliphate, diverse historical interpretations on the use of jihad, and the use of violence versus non-violence have distinguished hundreds of Islamic fundamentalist movements worldwide from the mid 20th century on in their respective agendas to achieve political goals in the realm of the divine. Islamic fundamentalists throughout the Middle East were often suppressed by repressive Arab nationalist governments of the 1950s and 1960s, and are still suppressed today, for their open opposition to current authoritative regimes. Groups and parties such as Hizb ut-Tahrir rejected the opportunity to join any type of political participation or even electoral processes and denounced those political systems as un-Islamic. The 1960s and 1970s brought forth another category of “politicized Islamic ideology,” widely referred to as Islamism or political Islam. The critique of an existing order in the Arab and Muslim world was as central as the critique of the Western world’s dominance and hegemony. Islam became increasingly instrumentalized to bolster arguments that addressed social, political, economic, and cultural changes alike. Even though the “West” was critiqued, modern western technology was not. Weapons and communication tools were used by many Islamists to “enhance” their arguments. Their political agenda was driven by educated intellectuals who strove to recruit foot soldiers from the urbanized masses and lower classes--unemployed youth with no prospect for upward mobility in their systems.

⁵ Seyyid Qutb, *Milestones* (Dar Al-Ilm, Damascus, Syria,----), p. 85.

But as a product and consequence of failed political Islam of the 1960s and 1970s, neo-fundamentalist movements rose up by the 1980s that favored less politics and more virtue and purity by grassroots activism. A gradual transformation and slow Islamization of society became of higher priority to neo-fundamentalists who were now seeking active political participation and representation. Some of them ascended from the local to the national level and saw socio-political issues beyond territorial borders as the new battlefield in the frame of globalization. However, with the continuation of second-generation Islamists, the emphasis on “jihad” as a global struggle and random violence against societies mutated into the central notion for international and transnational Islamic ideologies known as the “Jihadist-Salafism” ideology.

The borders among the various Islamic doctrines are elusive and far more obscure than this rough categorization of ideologies and movements has demonstrated. As pure political objectives remain the central driving factor of Islamic fundamentalists’ agenda, it is of the highest importance to continuously analyze and evaluate every movement in its current environment and context alike in order to make solid projections and policy implications.

B. HIZB UT-TAHRIR AND THE RESURRECTION OF THE CALIPHATE

1. History of the Islamic Caliphate

The caliphate has always had an extraordinary meaning for Muslims worldwide. It describes a form of Islamic government in which the head of a state is the “Khalifah,” or caliph (successor, or representative). He is the leader of the Umma (Muslim community) and reigns as a representative of God on earth in accordance with the divinely given law—the sharia. With the death of the Prophet Muhammad, his four closest companions and successors (Abu Bakr, Umar ibn al-Khattab, Uthman ibn Affan, and Ali ibn Abi Talib) reigned in sequence over the first Islamic state, founded by Muhammad in 622 C.E. The caliphate was, from the early times of Islam onward, considered a just and legitimate system of rule for Muslims. The legal framework of the system was manifested in the Qur’an and the sunna (sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad and his closest companions), and continued to have a binding character for the caliphs to come in the history of Islam. The death of Ali ibn Abi Talib in 661 C.E. marked the end

of the era of the “rightly guided caliphs,” and a new epoch in Islam began with dynasties and empires such as the Umayyad, Abbasid, and Ottoman. The Ottoman Empire is considered the last official caliphate, and finally disintegrated in 1924.

The leaders and successors after the first four caliphs often believed in more authority than just that divinely given through the Qur’an and the sunna, and soon after, debates and conflicts started to arise over where the authority of a caliph ends. Religiously trained elite, the ulema, were believed to possess the knowledge about the religion and jurisdiction, resulting in many conflicts between the Muslim ruler and these Islamic scholars. This is an ongoing issue of internal conflict within Islam to this day. Many Muslims believe in a system where a Muslim leader is actively supported by a religiously trained ulema (e.g., Iran, Saudi Arabia), but only a minority sharply defends the caliphate system of the first four “rightly guided” caliphs that possessed combined power over politics, religion, and jurisdiction of an Islamic state.

The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and its consequences marked the end of the last worldwide caliphate. Deposing the last caliph Abdul Mejid and abolishing the caliphate in March 1924 swept aside thirteen centuries of accumulated Islamic tradition.⁶ As a few Islamic groups and movements continue to believe in the success and rightfulness of the caliphate system, a transnational Islamic group named Hizb ut-Tahrir follows its own vision of resurrecting the caliphate to create a “just ruling system” that eventually would expand beyond any historic Islamic border.

2. The Vision of Hizb ut-Tahrir

Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation) is a transnational Islamic fundamentalist group that operates in more than forty countries with main emphasis regions in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. The group claims to be a political party, with its ideology being Islam. Its objectives are strictly political, and its main goal is to topple an existing regime and to resurrect the caliphate to create structures and conditions similar to the times of the Prophet Muhammad and early seventh-century (C.E.) Islam. According to HT, any nation-state qualifies for being the founding territory to establish the caliphate, although an Arab or a Muslim state is best suited. Once established, the proposed Islamic

⁶ William Cleveland, “A History of the Modern Middle East,” (Westview Press, Perseus Book Group, Colorado, 2004), pp. 180-181.

state will then be responsible for transforming its society into a united umma, and for spreading the word of Islam throughout the rest of the world. Hizb ut-Tahrir rejects the modern, secular state structure and democracy as something “man-made,” humanly derived and “un-Islamic.”. This self-proclaimed political party does not participate in any type of secular elections throughout its regions of presence. Hizb ut-Tahrir does, on the other hand, not oppose modern progress and modern technology, whose advantages and benefits it willingly accepts and uses.

Hizb ut-Tahrir was founded in 1953 in Hebron by Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani (1907-1977), previously a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, who was inspired by the Islamic activist and thinker Seyyid Qutb. In the same year, Nabhani published his book Nidham uI-Islam, which remains the ideological foundation for the organization, especially as it contains the 186 articles of the “Constitution for an Islamic State.” As with other Islamic organizations, Hizb ut-Tahrir sees Islam as an all-encompassing system that includes politics, economics, and socio-cultural aspects of life. Nation-states and secularism are continuously rejected as part of the party’s overarching policy that strives to resurrect the caliphate, one led by a caliph and inspired by the success and glory of seventh-century Islam. The “clash of civilizations” between the “man-made” capitalist Western civilization and the “spiritual and divine” Islamic one is inevitable.⁷ According to HT, this clash has been primarily intellectual for centuries, but also a political, economic, and military struggle about the concepts of civilizations between the “kufr” and Islam. The intellectual struggle is considered obligatory for Muslims; even if it is not initiated by the “kufr” (unbeliever) civilizations.⁸

Hizb ut-Tahrir stresses the practice of jihad in its publications. The group advocates waging jihad to seize power, with, however, the emphasis on doing so in a non-violent way. Once in power, it is not clear if and how jihad will then be used to

⁷ Note: *The Inevitability of the Clash of Civilization* is the translation of the Arabic named publication *Hatmiyyat sira’a Ul-hadharat* by Hizb ut-Tahrir.

⁸ Hizb ut-Tahrir, 2002. *The Inevitability of the Clash of Civilization* (London, GB: Al-Khilafah Publications), pp. 40-62. Note: Hizb ut-Tahrir has withdrawn the internet publication for public access in late 2005. A copy is held by the thesis author.

spread the message of Islam--one of the obligations of all Muslims.⁹ The Qur'an contains references to both types of jihad, the active and militant type--referring to warfare action--and the more passive and spiritual, the internal struggle of a Muslim with himself. After the Prophet Muhammad had established the first Islamic state in Medina by peaceful means, he waged a jihad that was more violent and militant to spread Islam through the heartland of the Arabian Peninsula.

Hizb ut-Tahrir makes many references to this early period of Islam without clarifying its own intentions after the ultimate achievement of the Islamic state. The group states in its proposed Constitution for an Islamic State that its foreign relations with states such as England, America, and France are considered as "at war".¹⁰ How this war will be defined or even fought is not laid out in its current policy publications. Another relevant issue HT consistently addresses is the rejection of "infidel" societies and "apostate" state regimes. It opposes the current Arab regimes in the Middle East and accuses them of blasphemy for the limited implementation of Islamic "sharia" law. Notions such as democracy, liberty, and the sovereignty of states contradict the law of Islam according to HT. Even contemporary Islamic governments as in Iran and Saudi Arabia are not accepted due to their limited application of Islamic laws. The radical and extreme political agenda is evident in the party's perception of the state of Israel. Israel and its Jewish population are considered to be the biggest evil and are ultimately to be fought in order to achieve a complete Islamization in the Muslim and Arab World. "The only legally permissible encounter between Jews and Muslims is on the jihad battlefield," expresses the tough and militant stand on the Arab-Israeli dispute.¹¹ One of Hizb ut-Tahrir's main objectives is still to "free" all Muslim societies from Western ideological influences by fighting the dominance of the imperialistic Western regimes.

The group allegedly maintains its Headquarters in London, Great Britain, while the German "Innenministerium" (Ministry of Interior) assumes that the group intends to

⁹ Suha Taji-Farouki, 1996. *A Fundamental Quest: Hizb al-Tahrir and the Search for the Islamic Caliphate* (London, England: Grey Seal), p. 194 (Article 11).

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 215.

¹¹ Suha Taji-Farouki, "Islamists and the Threat of Jihad: Hizb al-Tahrir and Al-Muhajiroun on Israel and the Jews," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 4. October 2000, p. 28.

build similar organization structures within Germany. Germany banned the group successfully in January 2003 for its anti-Semitic rhetoric and propaganda; however, an estimated 150 HT fundamentalists continue to work underground. The July 2005 bombings of London's subways and increasingly "anti-Zionist" proclamations in Great Britain, Denmark, and the Netherlands bring the group more and more into the crosshairs of all central European governments.

C. ARGUMENTS AND RESEARCH STRUCTURE

Hizb ut-Tahrir alters its tactics and strategy in the various regions in which it is active. It appears that the political and social environments present in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia (mainly Central and South Asia) influence the intensity and type of action HT applies. Because HT openly addressed anti-Semitic issues with slogans and credible planned actions against Jews in Europe, the group faced prosecution in Germany and other European countries. As a result, HT changed its public rhetoric; however, a fundamental change in thought is unlikely due to its unchanged public objectives over the last five decades. The organization proceeds in a more aggressive manner throughout the Central Asian states. Uzbekistan has charged Hizb ut-Tahrir in the 1999 assassination attempt on President Islam Karimov, while in Azerbaijan six members were convicted for an attempted overthrow of the government. Uzbekistan officials insist that HT contradicts the legislation of the republic by instigating, organizing, and executing terrorist acts, not to mention the group's organization of illegal armed bands and criminal groupings. Hizb ut-Tahrir's current existence in the Middle East is highly speculative. Due to its official abandonment as a party in the 1950s and early 60s, the group was forced to go underground; therefore, hardly any reliable data is available decades later. Statistics of jailed HT members are published sporadically by some Middle Eastern governments and Human Rights Watch indicates that the group is active in the region, since hundreds of followers and sympathizers have been jailed and/or tortured in Middle Eastern countries. The combination of growing worldwide HT membership, ongoing anti-Semitic announcements and propaganda, and the unfathomable strategy of jihad against 'kufr' and 'infidel' societies and governments lead to the assumption that HT continues to be a viable threat to today's existing governments.

The thesis executes a strategic-choice approach and elucidates three different cases. The historical development in the regions of Europe, the Middle East, and Asia will strengthen the analysis and projection of the group's future behavior. This case comparison is exceptionally useful in the analysis of this Islamic movement that alters tactics and strategies according to the political environment in which it is embedded. Group ideology, methodology, and fundamental structures and thoughts are addressed in the second part of the thesis, while the third shows the historical evolution and diverse authoritative interpretations of Jihad, and how those continue to influence both violent and non-violent Islamic ideologies such as Hizb ut-Tahrir's. The thesis will conclude that Hizb ut-Tahrir is a multifaceted phenomenon that attempts to mask an Islamist threat with a legal façade. The group uses socio-religious content to disguise its deeply political objectives in order to seize power. Historic evolution and facts on the ground indicate that this idealistic view of a caliphate is outmoded and no longer realistic. The exemplary caliphate under the "rightly guided caliphs" existed for a mere thirty-two years in the seventh century, whereas the following thirteen-hundred years of Islamic history have shown various forms of Islamic governance and tradition that cannot be negated. The idealistic view of Hizb ut-Tahrir is an ideological threat to the modern nation-state and the Westphalian synthesis of 1648, which separated matters of politics from religion and faith.

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II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND HIZB UT-TAHRIR

A. MIDDLE EAST

1. A Complex and Demanding Political Environment

Taqim al-Din al-Nabhani was born in 1909 in Palestine and is the founder of the political party and Islamic group Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT). He was the son of a teacher of Islamic sciences and the grandson of a prominent judge associated with the Ottoman state. Taqim al-Din al-Nabhani, a 1932 graduate of al-Azhar in Cairo, went on to become a teacher in Haifa, Palestine. He altered his career in favor of his interest in Islamic law a few years later and became a judge in the Islamic court in Ramleh. Al-Nabhani was actively engaged in the political environment of Palestine even before its fall in 1948. He maintained contacts with former study colleagues in Egypt, and was continuously involved in an Islamic society called Jam'iyyat al-I'tisam. The establishment of a political party with the objective of Islamic revival was an early-proclaimed goal of his.¹²

The origin of the Islamic movement Hizb ut-Tahrir lies in the diverse and complex political environment of Palestine and the surrounding Arab states in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The established rulers of the Arab states were not viewed as legitimate by many, as they had no representation from their respective societies. Mostly, they were chosen from the minorities as a result of indirect British—or direct French—ruling, and were left with little power in high politics. While the colonial epoch was designed to prepare the Arab states for democracy and modernity, the result tended to be quite different. Weak state structures, a lack of industrialization, large-scale peasantry, and impoverished societies with artificial identities were some of the conditions under which the colonial powers handed these states their independence. The following era in the Middle East was initially defined by a wave of secular Pan-Arabism.¹³ The new elite, mainly from the military, created Arab nationalism from the top-down. It was meant to be the answer for the lack of identity and the lack of consolidated state institutions. Notions of an Arab unity combined with socialism, proclaimed by the Ba'th party, or the

¹² Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest*, p. 2.

¹³ Middle East is defined in this thesis to include the Arab world plus Iran, Turkey, and Israel.

circles of identities (African, Arab, Islamic) embraced by the Egyptian President Nasser were supposed to be the harbinger of physical unity, common identity, and economic success in the Arab world, although subsequent history proved to be the opposite. Corrupt state leaders, repressed societies, and stagnated economies dominated by state-led development were the fate of the Middle East in the 1950s. The creation of the state of Israel in 1948 was just another sign of the continuous power of Western imperialism, as well as the impotence of the Muslim population.

The social, economic, and political conditions in the heart of the Middle East were virulent when al-Nabhani offered his ideology as the ultimate solution to the problem. It was a strict Islamic ideology, one that was designed to bring back the Islamic spirit and power to withstand the ill-perceived ideologies of socialism, communism, and state capitalism. In November 1952, al-Nabhani applied for official recognition of Hizb ut-Tahrir as a political platform in Jordan. The application was rejected for the reason of incompatibility of the party's ideology, one that opposes the constitution and the regime of the country. The regime was aware of the fact that one of the group's projected goals was the eventual seizure of power. After the denial of permission to operate as a political party, al-Nabhani and his co-founders decided to register the group as an association in the West Bank, a possibility that was available as a leftover from old Ottoman law, which still applied in part of the West Bank. Sir John Bagot Glubb, a British officer and Chief of Staff of the Jordanian Army urged the regime to react harshly to that backdoor move and declared HT's activities illegal. A law called the "Preaching and Guiding Law" was passed in 1954 banning members of the party to give speeches in local mosques. Jordan reacted strictly to HT's request, although it allowed the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) to act as an association. The intentions of HT were evidently political, while the ones from MB were considered to be religious, educational, and social in character.¹⁴ Even its founder al-Nabhani was treated severely by denying him re-entry into Jordan, after a trip to Damascus. In consequence of this, al-Nabhani relocated to Damascus in November 1953, from where he continued to lead Hizb ut-Tahrir. The organization was very active throughout Jordan and the West Bank and held study circles to identify and build cadres, which were ultimately to be responsible for further recruitment of members. Muslims

¹⁴ Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest*, p. 8.

with religious education and affiliations were the prime leadership, along with teachers, merchants, and even military officers from the Arab Legion. At the time, Hizb ut-Tahrir was also in contact with representatives of the Muslim Brotherhood, and plans to unite the two movements were certainly discussed, although never realized. The ideologies seemed not to coincide, in part due to HT's claim that the Muslim Brotherhood showed too much of a liking for secular ideas.

In Jordan, the organization was forbidden to have activists talk openly or distribute leaflets in public, so HT slowly expanded their radius of action to reach Lebanon, Syria and Iraq in the 1960s. The leadership was convinced and optimistic that large parts of the society would follow HT's notions, and two attempted coups took place in Jordan in 1968 and 1969. A third coup in Jordan was at least discussed if not executed; however, no reliable information on this is available. Neither of them was successful, since they were revealed early enough to the King by an unknown member. The group felt that the liberation of Muslims should not wait much longer, for the next attempted coup took place in Iraq in 1972. With this unsuccessful last attempt at overthrowing a government, HT went into a phase of stagnation in the Middle East.

Political Islam, in general, appeared to be on the rise in the late 1960s and 1970s after Arab nationalism had ultimately failed. The devastating Arab defeat (Egypt, Syria, and Jordan) against Israel in 1967 showed the inability of Arab regimes to solve the Palestinian conflict. Saudi Arabia's wealth and power through its natural resource of oil left the impression that Islam rewards the Islamic state that has been created by the House of Saud. "The Khilafat (caliphate) movement in India, the creation of a Muslim Pakistan, and the use of Islamic symbolism that accompanied the struggles for freedom from European colonialism in Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Sudan, and Pakistan [were] all indications of how Islam played a major role in mass mobilization in moments of political crisis."¹⁵

Al-Nabhani died on 20 June 1977 in Beirut, and 'Abd al-Qadim Zallum assumed leadership over the party until his death in early 2003. There was speculation on Zallum's whereabouts during his lifetime; many believed him to be in Amman, while

¹⁵ Gerner & Schwedler, *Understanding the Contemporary Middle East*, p. 371.

according to other undisclosed sources he was in Lebanon during the last stage of his life. During the late 1970s, the leadership of Hizb ut-Tahrir was in contact with Ayatollah Khomeini. A proposed constitution for an Islamic state was presented to Khomeini in hope that he would take it as the basis for the Islamic regime after the revolution in Iran, but Khomeini did not react to the received offer. The organization found itself in a stalemate situation during the 1980s. Three decades had passed since its founding and, besides the unsuccessful coups between 1969 and 1972, little progress was evident. Hizb ut-Tahrir was not able to develop a broad popular support base in the Middle East and continued to struggle for followers of its ideology.

2. Last Generation Developments in the Main Emphasis Areas

Although the support base of Hizb ut-Tahrir was small and powerless in the Middle East, it still managed to spread its ideology throughout the Muslim countries by the 1990s. “[The] party currently operates in Jordan, Syria, the Occupied Territories, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Morocco, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Sudan, Turkey, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Indonesia.”¹⁶ The fact that the party was banned in most Arab countries since its formation made it more complicated to track its presence and growth in all these states. The heart of its emergence was in the Palestine territory in 1953 and even four to five decades later the presence and activities in the general Levant area remain a focus area for the group. Secret study circles and sporadic leaflet activities are frequent and constant enough to keep the flame alive.

The developments of the last two decades have showed much more liberalization towards Hizb ut-Tahrir in Jordan. The group is allowed a limited public voice, which it uses for press conferences and various other public statements such as talk in mosque facilities and media statements. The Jordanian offer from 1989 to take part in the political process was, however, rebuffed by HT itself. The group asserts that with a participation in elections it would have to declare that its political objectives are not against the constitution of the country, which cannot be reconciled with the projected resurrection of a caliphate. A complete normalization between the Jordanian government and Hizb ut-Tahrir is not to be expected due to another controversy. As the group’s

¹⁶ Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest*, p. 153.

Jordanian spokesman in Amman stated in May 1994: “There can be no peaceful relations with the Jews: this is prohibited by Islamic law. It is also prohibited to settle for only part of Palestine...It is impossible to solve the problem of Palestine by peaceful means: what is required is actual war, in the form of jihad.”¹⁷ What a jihad of Hizb ut-Tahrir might look like will be discussed in Chapter IV of this thesis.

Other countries in the Levant area act more strictly to the presence of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Syria, for example, currently imprisons over two hundred HT members and the government keeps close track and files on all member information. It is unclear how many HT followers are in the Palestinian areas of Gaza and West Bank, although there is no doubt about their general presence. HT’s constituency is rather limited in these territories, since its objectives are rather long-term, versus the required short-term successes proclaimed by HAMAS and Islamic Jihad Palestine.¹⁸ Almost all other Middle East states oppose the presence of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Egypt banned the party in 1974 and jailed over twenty-six members in 2002, Libya over sixty in the same year, and Lebanon several dozen over the last five years. The numbers do vary from source to source, and the reported ones seem to reflect a reasonable count, provided and published by Human Rights Watch.

The Gulf countries have so far reported a very low level of activity by HT. Oman claims to have no presence of group members, while Saudi Arabia has some in the eastern part of the Hijaz. Activities in Saudi Arabia are limited and considered extremely dangerous, since the distribution of leaflets leads to immediate imprisonment for Saudis and even to torture for non-Saudis.¹⁹ The major ideology is still dictated by the Wahhabis in the heartland of the Arabian Peninsula.

All in all, it is worth noting that reliable and diverse information is hard to come by. Hizb ut-Tahrir publishes information on methodology and ideology on its own

¹⁷ Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest*, p. 162.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 165.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 170.

website; however, conclusions on the intensity of presence are not possible. Information through the governments in the region is also limited and most likely biased due to local political implications.

B. EUROPE

1. The Open Playground

The shortage of workers in many European countries from the 1960s on led to policies in which foreign workers (also often referred to as “guest workers”) were called to fill the vacancies in mainly lower-class jobs. Many workers came from Arab and/or Muslim countries, especially from Turkey, Pakistan, and North Africa, but also from the Balkans and the Middle East. Many of these workers became unemployed after a few years, as the European economies recovered, yet they did not leave their host countries. Their families followed them to Europe, and the Muslim minorities developed into the strongest faction of minorities in many European states.

The causation of sore needs for labor influenced the developing relationship between the Muslims in Europe and their respective host governments. Social and cultural integration into local societies happened slowly for guest workers, and was very limited through the 1970s and early 1980s. Also this is often believed to be the Muslim immigrants’ fault, it must be stated that the European governments at the time were not fully prepared for this new challenge, either. Language programs, school integration, and cultural tolerance are only a few of the issues that needed attention by both Muslim immigrants and European governments. The partial dysfunction of cultural and societal integration led to some segregation of Muslim groups. “In France and other European countries, adolescents from Muslim families increasingly turn to rigorous practice of Islam, often a badge of cultural identity for second- and third-generation youths from immigrant families who feel marooned in Western society.”²⁰ Great Britain and the Netherlands were among the few who were able to establish multicultural societies with fewer visible integration problems. It should be stressed that the blank existence of Muslims in European societies did not, by itself, create the problem of Islamism;

²⁰ Rotella, “Europe’s Boys of Jihad”.

however, the grievances of segregated and excluded Muslims and the largely open borders between these countries certainly fueled the emergence of Islamist extremism in Europe.²¹

The emergence of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Europe can be traced back at least to the 1980s, when the first party leaflets were distributed in Romania and (former) Yugoslavia; at the same time, the first activists arrived in the British Isles. Other sources claim an earlier presence in Great Britain, in the 1970s, based on the fact that HT was not able to establish a constituency in Turkey, and therefore moved on into the heart of Europe to benefit from the greater political openness.²² Hizb ut-Tahrir used this political liberty in Europe to settle down and build headquarters structures to spread its ideology, via modern media, into a liberal society. Currently, Hizb ut-Tahrir operates in many European countries, such as the Netherlands, Denmark, Poland, Great Britain, and Germany.

2. Germany

No exact date on HT's first appearance in Germany can be agreed upon, but German Security Services has kept an eye on the group for over a decade now. Hizb ut-Tahrir distributed flyers and pamphlets in the same way as in other European countries. The propaganda material was distributed in several languages, such as Arabic, German, Turkish, and Urdu. Primary recruiting targets were mainly educated middle-to-upper-class society and students from technical universities such as the TU in Berlin. Dissemination of brochures and other publications such as the magazine "Explizit" also took place near Islamic centers and mosques in bigger cities within Germany.²³ Hizb ut-Tahrir's radical ideology and methodology quickly created suspicion in government institutions. On 10 January 2003, German Minister of the Interior Otto Schily announced a ban of HT within Germany. The party was claimed to misuse the liberal law and order of German democratic principles to spread propaganda for violence and anti-Semitic

²¹ CRS Report for Congress. "Islamist Extremism in Europe," pp. 1-3.

²² Zeyno Baran, *Hizb ut-Tahri: Islam's Political Insurgency* (Washington, D.C.: Nixon Center, 2004), p. 36.

²³ Note: Contents of the first paragraph on Germany is based on information released and provided by the German National Intelligence Service. It has been provided to the author for publishing purposes; however, the source remains to be unmentioned.

campaigns. Previous bans on the “Kalifatstaat” and the donation/charity association “Al-Aqsa” were precursors for the tougher responses from the German government on foreign extremists’ organizations. New laws and regulations, effective since after the terror attacks of 2001, enabled the government to ban groups that undermine the German law.

The propaganda meeting of 27 October 2002 at the Technical University in Berlin confirmed the group’s radical view by openly denouncing Israel’s right of existence and subsequently calling for its destruction. The call for the death of the Jewish population and the radical rhetoric for change in governance (general statements, not specifically for regime change in Germany) led to the decision to revoke HT’s legal status in Germany. A police search through twenty-seven suspicious apartments of HT members brought 282,000 Euros, 53,000 Deutsche Marks, vast amounts of propaganda material, and even highly suspicious chemicals in one apartment in Muenster.²⁴ The court appeal to reverse the final ban on the group was rejected once more in January 2006; however, eager members of Hizb ut-Tahrir continue to spread their ideological interpretations of “al-Wasatiyya” (compromise) on three different German-registered websites. In an October 2004 article on one of these sites, the HT author stresses that there is no such thing as a compromise for political solutions; “Islam would not allow this.” He also reiterates that integration into European culture and lifestyle must be rejected for the incompatibility of values such as personal freedom, sexuality, and religion. German law enforcement closed these sites and pressed charges against the owner, who resides within Germany.²⁵

3. Great Britain

Great Britain seems always to have had a special importance for Hizb ut-Tahrir. The group entrenched itself in the island nation in the early 1980s, along with those invited to fill the demand in the labor force. Hizb ut-Tahrir started in a standardized manner by holding study circles mainly among young students. A growing constituency of Pakistanis, Somalis, and Turks established a presence in and around London,

²⁴ Politikforum, at www.politikforum.de/forum/archive/6/2002/12/1/23569 [last accessed 28 May 2006].

²⁵ Note: Information is based on an individually released summary report from a German domestic law enforcement source.

Birmingham, Bradford, and Sheffield.²⁶ By the end of the 1980s, HT established its own media center, “Al-Khilafah”, from which it prints books, leaflets, journals, and other distributed publications.

The British population and government started to be concerned about HT when the group insensitively spread its anti-Semitic rhetoric in speech and publications. In response to the Kuwaiti airliner hijacking in 1988, HT published a response entitled “The Islamic rule on hijacking aeroplanes.” In this two-page article, the HT representative clearly states the rightfulness of hijacking an aircraft that belongs to a “kafir” (unbelieving) country that is considered to be “at war with” Muslims, like Israel.²⁷ “... [the] hijacking or destruction of planes or terrorizing or killing those on board, all this is harm [unlawful] from the Islamic viewpoint, except if the aeroplane’s passengers belong to a Kafir state at war with Muslims.”²⁸ According to HT’s article 185 in the proclaimed constitution of an Islamic state, states such as the U.S., Britain, France, and Russia would fall into this category.²⁹ The quarterly English journal “Al-Fajr” along with other medial appearances became the primary platform to spread HT’s view on current political events and its brand of Islamic ideology. Hizb ut-Tahrir’s propaganda was especially attuned to the “underprivileged, suffering from poor housing, high unemployment and racial discrimination...[and] the party gives [these] alienated young Muslims a sense of belonging, and an unequivocal answer to their search for an identity.”³⁰ The group competed against other Islamic groups in Britain by either influencing or interrupting ongoing meetings, or even by holding equivalent sessions themselves a few hundreds yards away from other Islamic groups. One of the big differences, however, was that HT has never claimed to solve the problem of delivering social goods to its constituency;

²⁶ Baran, *Islam’s Political Insurgency*, p. 36.

²⁷ *The Islamic Rule in Hijacking Aeroplanes*, 8 April 1988, insert with Al-Fajr, no.12 April 1988, available at http://hurryupharry.bloghouse.net/archives/2005/08/19/hizb_ut_tahrir_the_islamic_rule_on_hijacking_aeroplanes.php [last accessed 12 March 2006].

²⁸ Ibid, last paragraph on two-page document.

²⁹ Note: For the “Constitution for an Islamic State,” see Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest*, pp. 193-215.

³⁰ Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest*, p. 177.

rather, it advocated the resurrection of the caliphate as the first and most important step. All the other problems would regulate themselves with the proper implementation of Islamic ruling.

Hizb ut-Tahrir was soon perceived to be a threat for the British non-Muslim and Muslim societies alike. It created a schism between the Muslim populations by offering its own interpretation of Islam, and was also a growing influential threat to the non-Muslim British way of life. Although one HT leader stated in 1994 that “[we] don’t want to establish the Khilafah in Europe or in Britain; that would be wrong because we say we must resume an Islamic way of life which must take place in a Muslim country,” the party continued to spread its anti-Jewish rhetoric and even threatened murder against British politicians such as Prime Minister John Major in 1991.

The events of 11 September shed a new and more intense light on Islamic groups advocating radical views and rhetoric. Although Hizb ut-Tahrir was never known to be involved in any terrorist activities, the call for banning the group in Britain became louder. A governmental announcement in August 2005 by Prime Minister Tony Blair of the intention to proscribe Hizb ut-Tahrir was perceived as very controversial. The new clause of “glorification” in the British anti-terror bill might not be sufficient to proscribe the group, as Hizb ut-Tahrir can only be accused of “providing inspiration to potential terrorists.”³¹ As some concluded in the Lords debate over the anti-terror bill, proscription is a valuable tool, but it should be handled with the greatest of care.³² Hizb ut-Tahrir perceives this discussion as a double threat to its existence. For one, such a decision would drive the group underground in one of its last standing European strongholds, but of even higher interest, it would take away HT’s legal media and communication headquarters, from which it produces, publishes and distributes its whole print media and internet-based information material.

³¹ Baran, *Islam’s Political Insurgency*, p. 37.

³² KCom Journal, “Government resorts To Proscribing Groups Despite No Evidence of Wrong Doing,” available at www.khilafah.com/home/printable.php?documentID=13020 [last accessed 13 March 2006]; see also for supporting contents on the issue by BBC News, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/4718658.stm [last accessed 13 March 2006].

C. CENTRAL ASIA

1. Central Asia³³

The historic development and presence of Hizb ut-Tahrir in the central Asian states can not be underestimated. The collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union in general created a stage of political and socio-economic uncertainty which the central Asian governments and their societies needed to balance. The failed ideologies of socialism and communism left the lower class of society in particular with little to turn to. But even before that, the “cultural assault” by the Russians in the 1930s had already had deep effects in the central Asian populations by its elimination of all religious and Islamic affiliation in people’s everyday life. Most of the Islamic movements had to go underground at that time while continuing efforts to stay present in the people’s minds. Subsequently, religious missionaries and associated Islamic ideologies filled the new vacuum that had been created as a consequence of the quick and broad changes to the region in the early 1990s. “The number of mosques, madrassahs, and seminaries in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan alone quadrupled in [the] first three years of independence...”³⁴

The governments throughout Central Asia did not undertake serious structural reforms after that enormous shock to the political and economic system. Repressive regimes, massive unemployment, and rising crime rates led to increased poverty and a broad radicalization within the populations. At the same time, the increasing influence of “Western culture”, manifested in such areas as capitalism, free societies, and pop culture, gave the appearance of a morale decline in societal values, which groups and organizations such as Hizb ut-Tahrir intended to counterbalance with their Islamic ideology. The group introduced an agenda of mainly three points that were exceptionally attractive to the region. Firstly, it called for the return to Islamic values as the medication for the social illnesses and decline in Central Asia; secondly, it called for the reinstitution of sharia, an Islamic “just” law for society, once the party had seized

³³ Note: For the purpose of this thesis, Central Asia is geographically defined as the five “stans” of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. These states gained their independence in 1991.

³⁴ Alisher Khamidov, “Countering the Call: The U.S., Hizb ut-Tahrir, and Religious Extremism in Central Asia,” The Saban Center for Middle East Policy, Brookings Institution, 2003, p. 2.

power; thirdly, in opposition to the extremist and violent Islamic group IMU, HT claimed to reject violence. Its message was very popular, especially since the memory was still fresh for large parts of the population of all the violent upheavals, bloody ethnic clashes, and resulting grievances that took place in the late 1990s in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

The leadership of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Central Asian states stems from an educated lower middle class, some with reasonable financial support; this must be put into context. The historical evolution had not given the region much time to develop economically, nor has it had great capacity to grow a broad entrepreneurship or middle-class society. Members of HT, however, are more difficult to analyze. In Uzbekistan for example, the followers seem to be more educated, although only 8 per cent were business class, and 56 per cent were unemployed.³⁵ In Tajikistan, the mass consists of unemployed youth and a small number of students. Surprisingly, the members in Tajikistan come largely out of a secular area, where HT manages to attract such a constituency by giving them hope through its Islamic ideology.

Hizb ut-Tahrir uses a wide spectrum of activities to recruit members. Leaflets and audio tapes, mostly provided by its British media centre in Asian languages, but also demonstrations in the streets or material and financial support for HT and non-HT prisoners show how versatile the group is in presenting itself. According to information of the Embassy of Uzbekistan to the United Kingdom of Great Britain, the London based “Kiedat” (supreme legislative body of HT in UK) “gives orders to HT members to carry out various protest actions and anti-governmental demonstrations... [and also] propaganda materials of Kiedat are received by Internet in the Kyrgyz town of Osh, and then by use of floppy disk or piece of copies are forwarded...for subsequent duplication and spreading.”³⁶ The distribution of Islamic literature of “HT’s brand” had some serious significance from early on in the Central Asian states. The intention to influence education of children in schools and the distribution of material throughout the countries intend to achieve large-scale mobilization, which is viewed as necessary in order to enter

³⁵ International Crisis Group, “Radical Islam In Central Asia: responding To Hizb ut-Tahrir,” p. 19.

³⁶ Embassy of Uzbekistan to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, “Hizb ut-Tahrir and Its Undermining Activity in Central Asia.”

the second stage of “preparing its umma” for a subsequent takeover of governance.³⁷ The leaflets mostly discuss poverty, unemployment, migrations to Russia, land mines on Tajikistan’s border with Uzbekistan, government corruption, and other social grievances such as lack of gas and electricity throughout the region.

Hizb ut-Tahrir intensified its efforts to achieve power in the Central Asian states by meeting with other extremist groups in 1997, among them the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and the international terrorist network of Al-Qaeda.³⁸ The IMU is known to be violent for its abduction of military personnel and government officials in the city of Osh in Kyrgyzstan, and the Tashkent bombing, both in 1999. Their connections to the Taliban and Al-Qaeda go back to 2001, where IMU forces joined them in a combined effort against the U.S. led invasion in Afghanistan.³⁹ There are various speculations about the intensity and modalities of the connections between HT, IMU, Taliban, and Osama bin Laden’s Al-Qaeda network; however, there seems to be no doubt that these ideologies have gotten together to promote further political change in the greater region of Central Asia, to include the areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan. In the worldwide combined effort to fight religiously motivated extremists and terrorism, all Central Asian states undertake serious measures to control the spread of HT’s ideology by imprisoning large numbers of HT members. In Uzbekistan alone, an estimated 4,200 followers of HT are in prison, in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan less than 200 members are being held and charged due to criminal activities.⁴⁰

2. South Asia

HT has extended its sphere of influence over the Central Asian region and into South and Southeast Asia. Repressive Central Asian regimes execute massive crackdowns since the mid 1990s on the party and its action, forcing members and existing structures to deport south into the neighboring South Asian states. There were

³⁷ Note: The methodology for seizing power will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

³⁸ Embassy of Uzbekistan to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, “Hizb ut-Tahrir and Its Undermining Activity in Central Asia.”

³⁹ Baran, *Islam’s Political Insurgency*, p. 75.

⁴⁰ International Crisis Group, pp. 33-37.

traces of presence in Indonesia as early as 1983, and in reference to its own published “Global Dawah Map,” HT executes today demonstrations and other activities in Pakistan and in Bangladesh.⁴¹

a. Presence in Bangladesh

In 1992, Syed Golam Mowla, a teacher of Dhaka University went to Great Britain for a higher study on a Commonwealth scholarship. During his stay on the British Island, he got in contact with members of Hizb ut-Tahrir and familiarized himself with the group’s ideology. After his return to Bangladesh, Mowla began to hold study circles and meetings in which he was able to convince fellow Muslims that an organization such as Hizb ut-Tahrir would be able to improve the political, economic, and social conditions in Bangladesh. “Then in 2001 [Mowla] organized a seminar titled ‘Clash of civilization’ at Dhanmondi’s BETS Centre and through that Hizb ut-Tahrir Bangladesh chapter [had] formally emerged.⁴²

Hizb ut-Tahrir’s formally announced its political interest in Bangladesh since the elections in 2001. The group not just started to critique the current government, and especially the two main secular parties (Awami League [AL] and Bangladesh Nationalist Party [BNP]), but instead, it stated openly that this type of government (parliamentary democracy) is illegitimate and should be considered as an enemy of Islam and all Muslims. Conventional elections just bring officials into power, but will not change things radically for Bangladesh, according to HT. Instead, a caliphate that observes the rules and regulations of the sharia is to be established as a practical necessity and also as a religious obligation. It is a practical necessity for the synergy effect of combining the manpower throughout the Muslim lands (considering the caliphate keeps expanding from the initial founding state), “with the money of Saudi Arabia, the agricultural potential of Sudan, and the Egyptian expertise, leading [the caliphate] to a

⁴¹ Khilafah Magazine International, August 2005, pp. 20-21.

⁴² Shafiq Rahman, “Call for Khalifah – A Look into Hizb ut-Tahrir Bangladesh,” available at <http://www.probenewsmagazine.com/index.php?index=2&contentId=827> [last accessed 14 April 2006].

productive and successful economy.”⁴³ But it is also a religious obligation for the reason of the necessary existence of “a pledge of allegiance” on the neck of every Muslim, accordingly, a caliphate with a legitimate caliph rendering such, has to be in place.⁴⁴

Hizb ut-Tahrir states that *kufir* (unbelievers) systems to include secularism, democracy, and capitalism control wide parts of Muslim lands to include Bangladesh. And especially in Bangladesh, these ideas are responsible for the uncontrolled crime, corruption, extreme inequality, and dependency on other nations.⁴⁵

The recruiting of members for the party takes mainly place in and around public and private universities. Current members often address serious issues of globalization, imperialism, and economic systems in student discussions, in which the local level leadership is able to screen for future potential members. The creation of an expanding membership is as much of interest as finding sympathizers in general. Both will have a place in the ideology of Hizb ut-Tahrir, which needs the elite, educated, and well established (financial) leadership; but also the broad support from sympathizers in order to build the “critical mass support” for the final stage of seizing power. Student unions and student political bodies are one of the loopholes HT uses as a legal means to operate on campus, after university authorities limited the group’s actions in prayer rooms, canteens, and study rooms.⁴⁶

Along with a crowd of 10,000 demonstrating Muslims, HT members continuously take the streets in Bangladesh to demonstrate against the European (and particularly the Danish) embassies in reference to the “Muhammad cartoons” that were

⁴³ Hizb ut-Tahrir, “Khilafah is the Answer,” Al-Khilafah Prokashoni (Dhaka, Bangladesh: 2002), pp. 6-8, available at <http://www.khilafat.org/newPages/Books/books.php> [last accessed 15 April 2006].

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 12.

Note: The Prophet Muhammad made it an obligation that every Muslim should have a pledge of allegiance [baya] on his/her neck. He described the person who dies without a pledge of allegiance on his neck as dying a death of the days of ignorance. The pledge of allegiance is not given to anyone except the caliph.

⁴⁵ Hizb ut-Tahrir, “Reestablishing the Khilafah State,” electronic leaflet from February 2003, available at <http://www.khilafat.org/newPages/Leaflets/leaflets.php?PHPSESSID=0f539b0666c4101146ef2811657e1404> [last accessed 18 April 2006].

⁴⁶ Mahfuz Sadique, “Hizb ut-Tahrir: Islam’s new face in Bangladesh,” available at <http://www.hizb.org.uk/int/index.php?id=3070> [last accessed 17 April 2006].

first printed in a Danish newspaper/magazine in September 2005. Hizb ut-Tahrir's media office in Line, Dhaka in Bangladesh asked in the follow-on press conference for the closure of the responsible embassies and the expelling of their ambassadors.⁴⁷ At the same time, the spokesman announced three more demonstrations in Dhaka City, the National Mosque, and in the places of Chittagong, Sylhet, Khulna, and Rajshahi. Demonstrations are a constant phenomenon in Bangladesh, such as the one in January 2006 against the plans for a future establishment of CIA bases in Bangladesh. The group has its own website for Bangladesh, along with its official spokesman Mohiuddin Ahmed. The budget to run campaigns and produce distributive information is about Tk 60,000 per month, which is provided by members and leaders of the group according to its own statement.⁴⁸ Similar to its appearance in other countries, Hizb ut-Tahrir claims to be in opposition to the regional government; however, it emphasizes its non-violent operations, with no intentions to forcefully impose anything on the local population.

b. Pakistan

As far as the presence in Pakistan goes, HT is one of many Islamist groups in the region, with little ground to gain. Organizations such as the Jamaat-i-Islami are stronger and have bigger constituencies while competing for the same target audience of educated classes. As a non-sectarian group in a Shia minority region, HT has little chance to compete against the Jamaat-i-Islami. The Jamaat-i-Islami has a political agenda that specifically focuses on socio-economic changes in Pakistani society in addition to its overarching goal to unite the umma. The activities in Pakistan remain in large parts underground, and besides the official announcement of the group's spokesman Naveed Butt, little is known about names, size and structure of the Pakistani HT organization.

⁴⁷ Hizb ut-Tahrir Bangladesh, "Press Release", 10 February 2006.

⁴⁸ Rahman.

III. THE WAY TO SUCCESS

A. HIZB UT-TAHRIR'S IDEOLOGY

Dear brothers and sisters, the vital issue for Muslims in the whole world is the re-establishment of the rule of Allah through establishing the Khilafah, and appointing a Khalifah for the Muslims, who is given the pledge on the Book of Allah and the traditions of His Prophet in order to demolish the rules of Kufr and to replace them with the laws of Islam both in implementation and application, to transfer the Muslim lands to Dar ul-Islam (Land of Islam), to make the society in Muslim lands an Islamic society, and to carry the message of Islam to the world by invitation and Jihad.⁴⁹

Hizb ut-Tahrir claims to be a political party, one whose activities are politics and ideology is Islam.⁵⁰ The group applied to become a political party in late 1952 in Jordan, but since the denial of that application by the Jordanian government at the time, HT has not participated in the regular political process. Even the offer to compete in the elections of the Jordanian government in 1989 was refused by the leadership of HT for the reason of not respecting secular, non-Islamic elections. According to HT, political parties are to be allowed in the Islamic state, but they have to be strictly Islamic and their task is to ensure the proper and legitimate ruling of the caliph as the head of the state. Democratic parties and elections as executed in the Western world are considered “kufr” and forbidden for Muslims. In Western democracies, the people are the absolute master for the application of “ruling of the people, for the people by the legislation of the people.”⁵¹ The people are “masters over themselves” for guaranteeing each other the four freedoms of belief, opinion, ownership, and freedom. Islam does not reserve these freedoms to the decision of humankind; they are solely the sovereignty of God and Islam itself, according to HT. Hizb ut-Tahrir completely rejects the sovereignty of the individual, the people, or even the state, seeing sovereignty as the exclusive right of God. God alone is sovereign, and worldly governance is subordinate to the divine ruling. The

⁴⁹ Hizb ut-Tahrir, *The Methodology of Hizb ut-Tahrir for Change*, p. 4.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 23.

⁵¹ Hizb ut-Tahrir, *Democracy is a system of kufr: It is forbidden to adopt, implement or call for it*, p. 6.

caliph is to be appointed to ensure the proper application of the sharia within the Islamic state. However, a separation between worldly matters and religious ones is not allowed; Islam is the sole and unified power with the primacy of God.

The group believes that all the Muslim countries today are ruled by governments of kufr (unbelievers). There are, according to HT, only a few states that impose Islamic ruling, such as Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Iran; however, that law is mostly applied to social or family issues and, therefore, the countries are in the viewpoint of the sharia still considered to be Dar-ul kufr (land of disbelief). Dar-ul Islam (land of Islam) on the other hand, is defined as the “land that is governed by the laws of Islam and whose security (Aman) is maintained by the security of Islam, i.e. by the authority and protection of Muslims inside and outside the land, even if the majority of its inhabitants are non-Muslims.”⁵² This definition emphasizes not the inhabitants that live in a country, but rather the laws and security (aman) that are present and applied by the ruler. With this assessment, the acting ruler has to implement the sharia law and the “Islamic way of life” to ensure the two requirements of law and security. Referencing the times of the Prophet Muhammad in the seventh century, HT argues that the best jihad is the word of truth spoken to an unjust ruler, while the use of material power and arms are legitimized only in the one case “where the ruler shows clear kufr, i.e. if he judged with the rules of kufr, or if he kept silent about the domination of kufr over the [Muslim] lands. In that case he should be fought against and arms should be raised against him.”⁵³ This is in clear and open opposition to current Arab and Muslim regimes, who govern the majority of Muslims in the Middle East, Central and South Asia, and whom HT considers to be still subordinate to Western governance and dominance.

The resurrection of the caliphate, re-establishment of the Islamic way of life, and spread of the word of Islam (i.e., carrying the Islamic Da’wah) by word and jihad are

⁵² Hizb ut-Tahrir, Democracy is a system of kufr: It is forbidden to adopt, implement or call for it,” p. 6.

⁵³ Hizb ut-Tahrir, The Methodology of Hizb ut-Tahrir for Change, p. 20.

Hizb ut-Tahrir's aims. All these objectives are strictly political and not spiritual, or educational, or organized with a welfare character as are other Islamist groups' goals.⁵⁴

B. THE CALIPHATE

1. Caliphate Structure

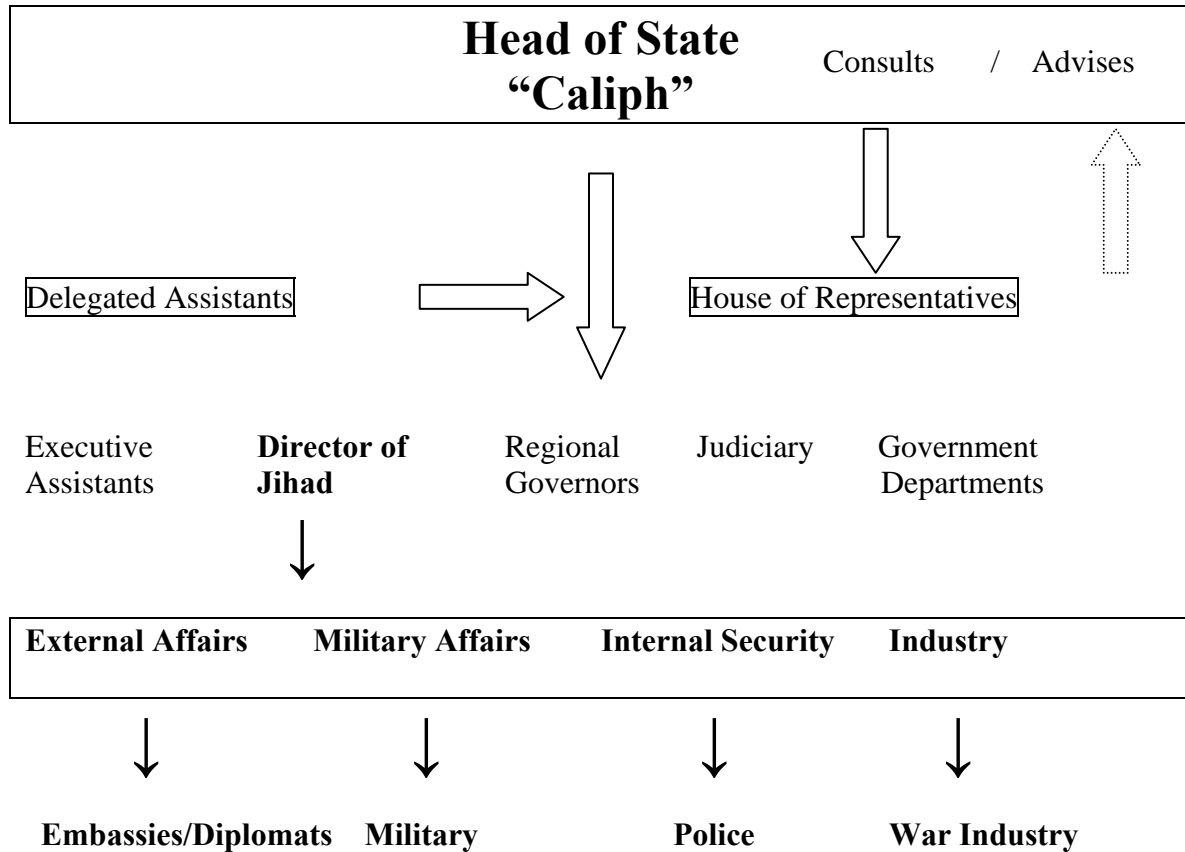


Figure 1. Caliphate Structure

The caliphate is a political system from the ideology of Islam that enshrines: the rule of law, representative government, accountability by the people through an independent judiciary and the principle of representative consultation.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Hizb ut-Tahrir, *The Methodology of Hizb ut-Tahrir for Change*, pp. 23-25.

⁵⁵ Hizb ut-Tahrir, "The Caliphate Structure," available at www.hizb.org.uk/caliphate/ [last accessed 11 March 2006].

The head of this state is a caliph, elected by the citizens of the caliphate through the process of “baya.”⁵⁶ It is a democratic election process, in which every citizen’s vote counts equally. The ruler, once elected, is held responsible for running the state in the sense of the divine (i.e., Qur’an and Sunna) and according to the sharia. As a servant of the people, he can be criticized and questioned, and an independent judiciary can remove him from power if he rules outside the boundaries of Islam.⁵⁷ According to the “Proposed Constitution for the Islamic State” the caliph is “the state himself.” He is responsible for foreign and domestic policies and also the leader of the Army. He is bound to the legal rules derived by legal evidences, based on the Qur’an, the Sunna, the Companions’ consensus, or deduction by analogy (bi’ya and ijtiḥad).⁵⁸

The Department of the Jihad Commander oversees four sub-departments: the Department of External Affairs, Military Affairs, Internal Security, and Industry. In general, jihad training centers, military forces, police, and heavy industry for the production of war-time material are all under the centralized command of the Jihad Commander, who in turn is subordinated to the Caliph, the ultimate commander of the army. According to HT, rules of engagement for fighting a jihad must be observed; they are framed in the proposed Constitution for an Islamic State. The notion and concept of Jihad will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter IV of this thesis.

The power of this hierarchical structure is centralized in the person of the caliph. The House of Representatives has no real power in a legislative sense. Its role is to advise the caliph; he uses the House of Representative only for consulting purposes. The House of Representatives, furthermore, ensures the implementation of government policies within the capital and the provinces.

The judiciary does have the authority to sentence anybody within the umma—to include the caliph—in the case of a proven offense. The caliph has, therefore, no juristic immunity and could even be impeached and removed from office once proven guilty of

⁵⁶ Note: “baya” is Arabic and stands generally for the voting process by the people. Than can either be by a voting card, text messaging, or even email.

⁵⁷ Note: According to Hizb ut-Tahrir documents, the legal interpretation in the sense of “ijtiḥad” is legitimate for ruling the caliphate.

⁵⁸ Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest*, pp. 194-197.

an offence. The guideline of the presumption of innocence exists in an Islamic Court, and the onus is on the plaintiff to provide the evidence.⁵⁹ Generally, the proposed judiciary system is based on the primary sources of Islam (Qur'an and sunna), and the procedural framework for courts and judging is supported by multiple hadith of the Prophet Muhammad.

For the rule of the Islamic state to become and remain effective, four principles must be implemented and maintained according to HT:

1. The sovereignty belongs to the Shar'ia
2. The authority belongs to the Ummah
3. The appointment of one Khalifah
4. The Khalifah alone reserves the right to adopt the Shar'ia rules (i.e., to enact them as laws).

In the absence of one of the above, the ruling system becomes non-Islamic and loses its legitimacy.⁶⁰ Hizb ut-Tahrir notices that there are many obstacles to putting the Islamic state into effect. For one, there are many un-Islamic political and economic systems in the world, such as democracy, socialism, and capitalism. These systems have infiltrated the Islamic world and societies. They have corrupted Islamic thoughts in the Ummah and in its intelligentsia. This is the most important obstacle that needs to be overcome in order to proceed. The second obstacle is the presence of the current educational programs in the Muslim world, which were setup by the colonial powers. These structures are claimed to be responsible for the teaching of "misguided principles" that are demonstrated in such important everyday areas as administration, judiciary, government, and all teaching professions throughout Muslim lands. These postcolonial structures need to be replaced in order for the Da'wah (message of Islam) to find its way to the Ummah. Along with this education, a new generation of graduates in history, literature, philosophy and legislation is pre-programmed by the un-Islamic curricula to downplay the importance of Islam in solving the problems in their lives. The goal is to differentiate these Western cultural aspects from their scientific facets with clear results. The benefits of Western culture are in dispute and the results inconclusive, according to

⁵⁹ Hizb ut-Tahrir, "Life as a non-Muslim in the Caliphate," available at http://www.hizb.org.uk/caliphate/index.php?id=C0_136_45 [last accessed 11 March 2006].

⁶⁰ Taqiyy-ud-Din Al-Nabhani, *The Islamic State*, p. 227.

HT; therefore, it should not be allowed to run Muslims lives.⁶¹ In order to overcome these obstacles to the ultimate goal of an Islamic state, HT repeatedly stresses the importance of proceeding analogously to the Messenger of Allah. Any deviation from the Prophet Muhammad's actions would lead to a corruption of the Da'wah, and make it less possible to completely implement the Islamic way of life. In practical terms, a single successful implementation in any country would be sufficient to resume the full task of spreading the message of Islam worldwide, according to HT. The ultimate dream of one Islamic state "stretching from Spain in the west to China in the east and from Turkey in the north to Malaysia in the south, occupying the best parts in the world in terms of resources and strategic points...with a single correct ideology," would give Islam the power to oppose every existing superpower in the world.⁶²

2. The Constitution for an Islamic State

The Constitution for an Islamic state is an early construct of the group's founder Taqim al-Din al-Nabhani. Revisions of the original 1953 document have been undertaken, especially with Hizb ut-Tahrir's proposal to the revolutionary leadership of the Iranian Revolution prior to 1979. The constitution was derived by strict interpretation of Islamic legislative sources. The Qur'an and the sunna built the foundation and reference for much of the procedural framework. It contains 187 articles about the general rules, political system, social system, economic system, educational policies, and foreign policy of the caliphate.⁶³

The "General Rules" in section one of the constitution emphasize the importance and singularity of the Islamic doctrine and the domain of Islam. Sovereignty is attributed to Islam and not to any leader or the society. Rules and regulations are based on the Qur'an, the sunna, the consensus of the companions, and deduction by analogy (principle of bi'da and ijihad). The only exceptions are the notions of zakat and jihad, which are the sole responsibility of the caliph. Non-Muslims within the Islamic state are permitted to worship in their own ways. They are subject to the rules of the "dhimmies" (people of

⁶¹ Al-Nabhani, *The Islamic State*, p. 238.

⁶² Ibid, p. 245.

⁶³ Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest*, pp. 193-218.

contract) and have the rights of their faith, unless such rights conflict with the interests of the Islamic legal ruling, which then will have priority.

The “Political System” in section two of the constitution confirms the centralized governmental structure and the sovereignty of Islamic law over the people. The umma has the right to elect a caliph, who will stay in office for an undetermined amount of time. Death and judicial impeachment are the only means of replacing a caliph. The umma is allowed to build political parties in accordance with Islamic law for the purpose of “calling the ruler to account.” This is not to be understood as a political opposition, but rather as a monitoring or control function to ensure that the caliph rules in the sense of Islam. The system foresees eight pillars for the governmental apparatus: Caliph, Authorized Aide, Executive Aide, Jihad Commander, Judiciary, Provincial Governors, State Departments, and Umma Council.

The “Social System” is outlined in eight articles defining the relationship between men and women in the umma. Men and women are granted the same rights and obligations “apart from those which Islam, through its legal evidences, has prescribed specifically for women or specifically for men.”⁶⁴ The female role is considered to be primarily in the household as a wife and mother, although women are also allowed to participate in political issues and be employed by the state. Husbands, on the other hand, have the obligation to protect their wives and families and are responsible for providing them with a respectable standard of living.

The “Economic System” differentiates among three types of property rights: private, public, and state. Produced wealth out of ownership belongs to God alone and the state ensures appropriate taxation, to include kharaj and jizyia payable by non-Muslims. Zakat is collected from all Muslims and is redistributed through funds to entitled members of the umma (i.e., poor, needy, wayfarer). In this context, the state guarantees the well being of every member of the umma through this circulation of funds. Agriculture, industry, trade, foreign trade, and booty are means to raise income for the Islamic state, income that is to be funneled through the one allowed bank—the State Bank. The currency would consist of gold and silver only.

⁶⁴ Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest*, Article 110, p. 206.

The “Educational Policy” ensures that all methods and objectives of instruction are in accordance with Islamic doctrine. The state provides the central educational curriculum in order to foster Islamic personalities, resulting in knowledge and learning “associated with Islamic life’s affairs.” Technical disciplines and vocational skills are not rejected unless they contradict the Islamic point of view (i.e., painting and arts) with influences from cultures other than the Islamic.

The last section in the “Proposed Constitution for an Islamic State” deals with the “Foreign Policy” of the Islamic state. “[T]he foreign policy of the Islamic state is to convey the Islamic Message to the world...which is implemented by the defined method which never changes...jihad.”⁶⁵ This overarching statement is documented in article 183 in the constitution. Other nation states can be in treaty with the Islamic state based on economic, trade or cultural agreements, but “states such as England, America, and France that practice colonialism, and states which have ambitions in our lands, such as Russia, are regarded as states which legally speaking are at war [with the Islamic state].”⁶⁶

C. HIZB UT-TAHRIR’S METHODOLOGY

Hizb ut-Tahrir limited itself to proceeding strictly in accordance with the “divine rules.” This means that HT refers to the primary sources of Islam and backs its actions and plans with suras and verses from the Qur’an, or by deeds and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. By following the example of the Prophet, HT believes it can change the Islamic lands into Dar al-Islam and re-establish the Islamic way of life in the Islamic countries. The Prophet changed the “jahiliyya” (stage of ignorance and barbarism associated with pre-Islamic tribes) society in Mecca was changed through this exact method. By proclaiming the divine Islamic way as the only acceptable path, HT renounces everything else as kufr (disbelief).

The party... considers all religions other than Islam, like Judaism, Christianity, and all ideologies, like Communism, Socialism, and Capitalism as kufr religions and kufr ideologies; and it considers the Jews

⁶⁵ Al-Nabhani, *The Islamic State*, p. 143.

⁶⁶ Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest*, p. 215.

and Christians as kuffar (disbelievers), and whoever believes in Capitalism, Socialism or Communism as a kafr (unbeliever).⁶⁷

In order to create this Islamic society with strict Islamic values, HT established a three-step methodology for change. The first step is considered to be the stage of culturing. This step is exceptionally important as the vanguard of the political party and the party culture that is to be created. This group will be capable of carrying out the political ideas. Al-Nabhani stressed the “culturing” of those who wish to become members of the party, in order to have them make effective contact with society for further interaction. He does not consider this as schooling in the conservative sense; rather, it is more practical to steer the society in “progressive moves,” which can only be achieved through means of the party. A school would influence an individual, who would work to change society, while a party changes the society first, which will then change the individual. The presence of the party concept itself must be central in the culturing curriculum, as the party carries the ideology. For Al-Nabhani, the lack of idea crystallization, the absence of a method to implement ideas, and the dependence on persons without sound awareness (i.e., those who were driven by desire and zeal) were the three primary reasons why all previously known Islamic movements have failed throughout history.⁶⁸

The second stage encompasses the interaction with the umma. The transition from the culturing stage to the interaction phase has to happen naturally. This means that entering the second stage without having successfully completed the first stage is not possible. Entering the second stage is, therefore, evidence of the soundness in the structure of the party and the collective readiness to interact with the umma. The embodiment of the ideology, in the persons of the party members, enables the party to address the umma as a whole. This is a very critical point, as this stage will create the mass support in the society. “Islam would [then] be the inner sensation of the Ummah, and the party would be expressive of this sensation...[T]he Ummah would quickly understand the ideology and would interact with the party; hence the whole Ummah would be considered as the party and the select group would carry the leadership of the

⁶⁷ Hizb ut-Tahrir, *The Methodology of Hizb ut-Tahrir for Change*, p. 30.

⁶⁸ Al-Nabhani, pp. 1-18.

movement through the party structure.”⁶⁹ The means by which HT will convince the society are lessons in mosques, leaflets, magazines, public meetings and conferences, and also the use of the internet, with professionally equipped homepages in various languages. This mass support of the umma is a pre-requisite to enhance the struggle against those things standing between the umma and the implementation of the ideology of HT.

The third stage is the phase of assumption of government and seizure of power. The Islamic ideology will be put in place, and the message of Islam will be carried worldwide by the umma. This implementation of Islamic ideology needs to be “radical” in the sense of a revolutionary change that does not accept gradual changes through society (the method advocated by the Muslim Brotherhood, for example). A decisive difference in stage three compared to stage one and two is the action of seeking nusrah (help) for two reasons.⁷⁰ First, sufficient protection is needed by the party to continue carrying the message of Islam and second, nusrah will be needed to “reach the government, so as to establish the Khilafah and bring back the rule of Allah in life, the state, and society.”⁷¹

The underlying concept of all three phases is carrying the da’wah—the message of Islam. Hizb ut-Tahrir makes many references to the proceedings of the Prophet Muhammad in the seventh century. While in Mecca, the Prophet restricted himself to da’wah alone; physical force was only used later, after the migration to Medina. In the initial stage of da’wah, the Prophet called and cultured people individually to Islam. They met in concealed places and worshipped discreetly until the word eventually spread. Then, he addressed groups and individuals with the word of God to convert larger parts of the Qurayish tribe. With the death of Abu Talib, Muhammad lost protection and suffered persecution. The Qurayish opposed the da’wah with torture, internal and external propaganda, and boycott. As a consequence, Muhammad had to flee Mecca and sought protection for himself and his da’wah in Medina, using the concept of nusrah.

⁶⁹ Al-Nabhani, p. 20.

⁷⁰ Hizb ut-Tahrir, *The Methodology of Hizb ut-Tahrir for Change*, p. 38.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 39.

Although stages one and two are described by HT in detailed plans, little information is published for the “radical change” in the sociopolitical system in stage three. The notion of seeking *nusrah* in order to increase the chances of success is addressed, though how this help will be used is not further specified. Hizb ut-Tahrir is currently considered to be in the second stage. It addresses the societies in order to create broad support for its Islamic message, although its status is widely discussed and varies from nation to nation. The group is proscribed in many countries throughout the three main regions of presence (Asia, Middle East, and Europe), though it is known to be continuing its activities, often in a clandestine manner.

D. GROUP STRUCTURE AND MEMBERSHIP

1. Party Structure

Hizb ut-Tahrir is organized in a rigidly centralized and hierarchical manner. At the top is the commanding level, consisting of the “leadership committee” and the amir as the leader. This level is able to oversee the whole organization throughout the regions. It communicates downstream with the executive levels—also known as “provincial committees”—with the required guidelines for the execution of the agenda. Each ‘province’ at the provincial level equates to an individual nation-state and is led by the respective provincial committee, usually composed of about five to ten members. This provincial committee gives instructions further down to the local committee, usually consisting of four members. This local committee represents the organizational tool for the local level or urban centers. Study circles, meetings, and activities are planned and tasked to the “*mushrif*” (leader in the local level) in the individual villages. The organizational structure reaches the personal level with study circles and direct contact with individuals and prospective members. Study circles of about five members are used for in-depth screening of novices, their training, and of course for the indoctrination in HT’s ideology.⁷²

The party structure shows similarities to the proposed caliphate. The central leadership in the form of the “amir” passes directions and orders vertically through the command tree, while confirmation and action reports flow upward along the same line in return. The leadership oversees the ‘big picture’ and standardizes much of the

⁷² Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest*, pp. 115-121.

proceedings. This is exceptionally transparent in Hizb ut-Tahrir's use of the modern communication tool--the Internet. The various web pages in the countries of legal presence show standardized, high-quality informational material that is mostly published in Arabic, English, and the regional/local language for whichever country the site is optimized. Books produced by Khalifah Publications in London, Great Britain, can be openly accessed and downloaded by any interested audience. These publications reflect the ideology, methodology and standard reference works for a global synchronized "schooling." The provincial committee, as the responsible level in the respective state, will act in accordance with the central leadership's guidelines; however, it will implement the conditions and requirements while adapting them to the particular circumstances within that country. Again, the example of the web-based information shows that the digital leaflets that are published regularly (where allowed) deal primarily with the problems of the region. Political suppression, unemployment, crime, and the inabilities of a state to deliver social goods and services to its population are common topics and issues addressed at the provincial level. These matters do have major influence on the recruiting policy and target groups at the local level, as complex social and economic conditions drive attitudes and actions within societies. Perceived grievances on the local level make the societies vulnerable to idealistic solutions. The local level represents the working level. Distribution of informational material (in the form of paper leaflets) in urban centers and local mosques, one-on-one recruiting on campuses and local facilities, and the holding of study circles, meetings and conferences comprise the activities on the base level.

2. Recruiting Structure and Membership

The party accepts Muslim men and women as its members regardless of whether they are Arab or non-Arab, white or colored, since it is a party for all Muslims. It invites all Muslims to carry Islam and adopt its systems regardless of their nationalities, colors or madhahib (Schools of Thought), as it looks to all of them according to the viewpoint of Islam.⁷³

Despite the global and overarching equality in the recruiting policy, local recruiting of members seems to be heavily influenced by the region in which the party is

⁷³ Hizb ut-Tahrir, available at <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/english/english.html> [last accessed 30 March 2006].

acting. In Central Asia, for example, socially vulnerable people, to include unemployed, pensioners, young students, and single mothers, are the prime target group within the society. However, people from the local bureaucracies and law-enforcement services are also welcomed by the organization, as they have access to sensitive information and are capable of safeguarding or protecting party activities.⁷⁴ In Europe, and especially in Great Britain, HT tends to attract more-educated, lower-to-middle-class people. Students from colleges and universities, but also lawyers, doctors, and other men and women with reputable professions, have become followers of Hizb ut-Tahrir in the past. Still, the majority of members will come from the socio-economically underprivileged, who are often victims of racial discrimination and unemployment. These grievances and the unsuccessful societal integration make many young British Muslims susceptible to the ideology of HT that advocates the caliphate as the solution to all problems. Hizb ut-Tahrir is making a serious effort to try to reach each and every Muslim within Britain. The International Khilafah Conference held in 1994 was--with 7,000 attendants--an indication of how serious Hizb ut-Tahrir is in getting its message across. International Muslim leaders and intellectuals used the opportunity of freedom of speech to continuously spread radical rhetoric about the “unbelievers” systems of governance and the illegitimacy of the state of Israel.⁷⁵ Hizb ut-Tahrir used to publish a political magazine named “Explizit” in Germany prior to the group’s outlawing in 2003. The Summer 2000 issue addresses “all Muslims living in the Western world” by stating that it is specifically their responsibility to stand up for the Islamic system of governance, and that it is un-Islamic to blend into the regional systems and regulations.⁷⁶

In general, Hizb ut-Tahrir employs a twofold recruiting policy. It addresses all Muslims independent of race, nationality, or ethnicity. The educated, integrated and successful Muslim is needed to support the organization in structural matters. Distributive print media, internet presence, and various meetings and conferences require a sustainable budget that is well-funded through its activities and donations by the

⁷⁴ Evgenii Novikov, “The Recruiting and Organizational Structure of Hizb ut-Tahrir”.

⁷⁵ Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest*, pp. 181-183.

⁷⁶ Hizb ut-Tahrir, “Explizit: Das Politische Magazin fuer ein Islamisches Bewusstsein,” 8. Jahrgang / Nr.25, Sommer / Herbst 1421 n.H. / 2000 n.C., pp. 21-23.

group's members.⁷⁷ As a consequence of such, wealthy and well-established Muslims are the potential donors and standard-bearers for the respectability of Hizb ut-Tahrir. The lower class, unemployed, and socially unintegrated younger Muslim of contemporary societies is recruited to build numbers and drive the mass support that is needed for the ideology to take off in Muslim societies worldwide.

Hizb ut-Tahrir makes full use of the internet to spread its ideology. Various web pages can be accessed in multiple countries and languages--all designed to target the full spectrum of Muslims. Intellectual, highly critical, and challenging texts and books are offered as "enlightening" documents for the well-established Muslim in the "imperialistic Western world." This material discusses the problem of the Muslim population worldwide on the basis of ideological concepts, and offers a methodology of Islam in accordance with the primary sources of Islam. The online magazines and leaflets, on the other hand, deal with the day-to-day problems of Muslims in their regional environments. The content is highly propagandistic and often deepens the wounds of a hurt and disadvantaged portion of the population by demonstrating to them their "inferiority and helplessness" to their current regimes. Slogans and headers such as "Reestablishing the Khilafah State is the Only Way to Free Ourselves from the Oppression of the Western Colonial Powers," or "Islam is the Only Permanent Solution to Crime & Corruption in Society" are designed to give the audience no other valid solution than Hizb ut-Tahrir's Islamic ideal.⁷⁸ Aggrieved Muslims are supposed to get fired up against the supposed global propaganda campaign to prevent Muslims from adopting Islam. Many of these arguments are only able to grab hold of the already vulnerable and susceptible person, due to their extremely biased terminology. Last but not least, the internet presence exceeds the strict Islamic phraseology by offering music- and game-related sites, and also forums and chat groups for adolescents. Although the front pages of these sites often do

⁷⁷ Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest*, p. 184.

⁷⁸ Note: The slogans were headlines in Bangladeshi leaflets issued by Hizb ut-Tahrir's media office at the New Elephant Road, in Dhaka, Bangladesh in December 2002 (Shawwal 1423).

not show the name of Hizb ut-Tahrir, a deeper look into the subsidiary pages will reveal the secret of the ideology behind them.⁷⁹

An online database search (<http://haganah.org.il/jihadi/HuT.html>) on Hizb ut-Tahrir indicates more than twenty worldwide internet addresses, by which Hizb ut-Tahrir maintains its presence with books, digital leaflets, online journals and records about regional and local activities, to include peaceful demonstrations and Islamic conferences. Individual countries' regulations and restrictions often force the party to alter the web addresses and registrations, most of which are through European, Canadian and American providers.

⁷⁹ Madeleine Gruen, "Demographics and Methods of Recruitment," in "The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir: Deciphering and Combating Radical Islamist Ideology," by Zeyno Baran's Conference Report with the Nixon Center in September 2004.

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IV. JIHAD

A. HISTORICAL APPROACH TO JIHAD

Hizb ut-Tahrir emphasizes in all its publications the practice of jihad. The group advocates waging jihad to seize power, but with the emphasis on non-violent methods. Once in power, it is not clear if and how jihad will be used to spread the message of Islam, which is one of the main obligations of all Muslims.⁸⁰ Jihad is a core element of Islam and, therefore, a very important concept. The Qur'an contains references to both militant jihad and the "internal struggle/jihad" of a Muslim. In the seventh century, the Prophet Muhammad established the first Islamic state in Medina by peaceful means; thereafter, he embarked upon a stage of jihad that was more violent and militant in order to spread Islam over the heartland of the Arabian Peninsula.

Hizb ut-Tahrir refers to the early period of Islam without clearly stating its own intentions after the ultimate achievement of the caliphate. The group announces--in its proposed Constitution for an Islamic State--that its foreign relations with states such as England, America, France, and Russia are considered as "at war."⁸¹ However, as a high-level "mushrif" of HuT-Uzbekistan publicly stated: "Hizb ut-Tahrir wants a peaceful jihad that will be spread by explanation and conversion not by war. But ultimately there will be war because the repression of the Central Asian states is so strong."⁸² This statement was made in the regional Central Asian context; it raises serious concern about the overarching use of jihad, since Hizb ut-Tahrir faces serious crackdowns throughout Central and South Asia, the Middle East, and increasingly in Europe.

The second relevant issue Hizb ut-Tahrir addresses is the rejection of "infidel" societies and "apostate" state regimes. The organization opposes the current Arab regimes in the Middle East and accuses them of blasphemy for the limited

⁸⁰ Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest*, p. 194 (Article 11).

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 215 (Article 185).

⁸² Khamidov, p. 8.

implementation of Islamic “sharia” law. Notions such as democracy, liberty, and the sovereignty of states and human beings contradict the law of Islam, according to HT, for the only respected sovereignty for Muslims lays with God in tawhid.

The third central issue in Hizb ut-Tahrir’s political agenda regards the state of Israel. Israel and the Jewish population are considered to be the biggest evil and must eventually be fought in order to achieve the complete Islamization throughout the Arab and Muslim World. “The only legally permissible encounter between Jews and Muslims is on the jihad battlefield.”⁸³

The Qur’an, as one primary source of Islam and the basis for Islamic law, is the authority for Muslims worldwide. Its one-hundred-fourteen suras seek to give every Muslim a guideline for his existence in accordance with Islam. The Qur’an is the word of God, revealed to and recited by Muhammad, later written down and distributed in a canonical form by his successors. However, the absence of a central, earthly interpreting authority of Islam became reason for fragmentation among Muslims, and a variety of interpretations on various core issues of the Qur’an became widely dispersed and manifested. The following historical review of the diverse authoritative interpretations of jihad is essential in order to adequately analyze the possible alternatives for Hizb ut-Tahrir’s proceedings on jihad.

1. The Early Centuries of Islam

In 610 C.E., the first revelation of what later became the Qur’an was recited by the Angel Gabriel to Muhammad in a cave near Mecca. The Prophet Muhammad, as the first Muslim, found followers from his close surroundings and gradually converted them. Among them were his wife Khadija and his close companions Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali. The four companions became Muhammad’s sequential successors and are widely referred to as the “Rightly Guided” caliphs in the history of Islam. The local community did not immediately follow Muhammad’s ideology, and soon he and his close companions were persecuted and had to flee. They left Mecca and migrated to Yathrib, later renamed Medina. This event, the *hijra*, has had a tremendous impact on Muslims around the world and marked the start of the Islamic calendar in 622 C.E. Muhammad

⁸³ Suha Taji-Farouki, “Islamists and the Threat of Jihad: Hizb al-Tahrir and Al-Muhajiroun on Israel and the Jews,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 4. October 2000, p. 28.

established a broader constituency of Islam and finally succeeded in founding the first Islamic state with rules and laws based on God's words revealed to him--later to become documented into the Qur'an.

The early community of Islam was, from that point on, exposed to regulations and guidelines from God, while the revelations to Muhammad continued until his death in 632 C.E. The final parts of the Qur'an had then to be collected.⁸⁴ The revelations of God's words were constantly recited by Muhammad, so his companions and the Islamic community (*umma*) were permanently confronted with the new religious, legal and social framework for Muslims. Many of the Qur'an's *sura* and verses deal with fighting, warfare, and defense of the Islamic community; therefore, the Qur'an became the first real legitimate source of *jihad*. Fighting and wars were considered a normal state of life amongst pre-Islamic northern Arab tribes and were, therefore, regarded as lawful.⁸⁵

Active warfare and fighting have to be differentiated into an offensive and expansionist part on the one hand, and a defensive portion opposing the adversary's aggression on the other hand. The Qur'an offers reference and support for both alternatives. Qur'an 2:190 states: "And fight in the way of God with those who fight you, but aggress not: God loves not the aggressors,"⁸⁶ and stresses the defensive notion of waging *jihad* only against aggressors. However, the classic opposite example is expressed in verse 9:5: "Then, when the sacred months are drawn away, slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them, and confine them, and lie in wait for them at every place of ambush."⁸⁷ This verse clearly indicates an offensive and aggressive tone to initiate warfare against unbelievers. Even scholars of modern times still discuss the opposing nature of these two verses, and the majority of scholars are in

⁸⁴ Note: After the Prophet's death, Uthman (as the third caliph 644 - 656 C.E.) ordered the collection of loose papyrus-leaves from Hafsa (a widow of Muhammad) in order to have them bound into a single volume. Uthman canonized and reproduced it seven times, and had it distributed to the main Islamic centers and provinces of Kufa, Basra, Damascus, Medina, Mecca, Yemen and Bahrain.

⁸⁵ Rudolph Peters, "Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam," Marcus Wiener Publishers, Princeton, NJ, 1996, p. 1.

⁸⁶ A. J. Arberry, "The Koran: Interpreted," Touchstone Rockefeller Center, New York, NY, 1995, p. 53 (Note: Following Qur'an quotations throughout the essay will be based on Arberry's translation.)

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 207.

favor of the supremacy of Quranic verse 9:5 over 2:190, based on the historical abrogation where, within the Arab tribes, the state of war was the state of nature, and therefore lawful as such.

The enemies in every case were the “unbelievers,” a term that is used for both polytheists and the “People of the Book.”⁸⁸ The Christians and Jews are considered People of the Book and had, throughout the history of Islam, a somewhat protected status. They were to be kept (when conquered) as *dhimmies*, and had the option of making a “tax payment” to the Muslims to escape mandatory conversion, while accepting various legal disadvantages.⁸⁹ Submission or payment of tribute was an option for Jews and Christians and is mentioned in the Qur’an in sura 9:29: “Fight those who believe not in God and the Last Day and do not forbid what God and his Messenger have forbidden—such men as practice not the religion of truth, being of those who have been given the Book—until they pay the tribute out of hand and have been humbled.”⁹⁰

The doctrine of *jihad* serves several functions. One is to mobilize and motivate Muslims to participate in fighting, and to take over responsibilities as an individual believer of the *umma*. Secondly, waging *jihad* has been one of the main tasks for a caliph and became a tool for legitimacy for him as a ruler. A good ruler had to make continuous efforts in waging *jihad* to underline the spirit of spreading the “word of God,” or Islam in general. Thirdly, the doctrine provides the framework and rules about fighting and the relationship with the enemy, specifically the treatment of combatants, civilians, women, elderly and children, but also the prerequisites for war and the conditions for truce in. ⁹¹ The Qur’an supports Islamic warfare by Muslims. God was on the side of the believers,

⁸⁸ Note: “People of the Book” are considered those of the other monotheistic religions who also received revelations from God. The most common are the Jews and the Christians.

⁸⁹ Note: “Dhimmies” can be translated as “protected” and is to be seen in the context of the People of the Book. They were allowed to continue their religion, although they had to accept in addition to the tax, various social/legal disadvantages and limitations in clothing, marriages, and even personal freedom.

⁹⁰ Arberry, p. 210.

⁹¹ Peters, p. 5.

and even defeats of the Muslim army, in the early years of Islam's existence, were commonly explained as the "reinforcement of the unity" of the *umma*, with the intent to make it stronger in the end.⁹²

But fighting is not the only definition of *jihad*. "To strive" in a spiritual and religious sense is another interpretation, which has evolved progressively with the common acceptance of the *ahadith* as an authority and another primary source of Islam. The *ahadith* encompass mainly the sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad, but also of his companions. They are a collection of narrations about the ideal "Muslim way of life," and build the framework for the *Sunna*.

The Qur'an provides a basis for the spiritual meaning of *jihad*, i.e., "to strive," as verse 22:78 articulates: "And strive (*jahidu*) for Allah as you ought to strive (*haqq jihadihi*). He elected you and did not impose upon you any hardship in religion-the faith of your father Abraham. He called you Muslims before and in this that the Apostle may bear witness against you and you may be witness against mankind. So, perform the prayer, give the alms and hold fast to Allah. He is your Master; and what a blessed Master and a blessed Supporter!"⁹³

But also *ahadith* can be used to underline the spiritual nature of *jihad*. One of the most representative *hadith* in this context is from the collection of al-Mubarak's "Kitab al-jihad." This *hadith* introduces three central figures in Islam; the "True Believer," the "Sinning but Repentant Believer," and the "Hypocritical Believer." These three figures are the central elements for judging and categorizing Muslims, especially in categorizing Muslim rulers, an important point which will be covered later in the essay.

"The slain [in jihad] are three [types of] men: a believer, who struggles with himself and his possessions in the path of God, such that when he meets the enemy [in battle] he fights them until he is killed. This martyr [shahid] is tested, [and] the camp of God [is] under his throne; the prophets do not exceed him [in merit] except by the level of prophecy. [Then] a believer, committing offenses and sins against himself, who

⁹² Note: David Cook explains in his book "Understanding Jihad" the following: "The defeat at Uhud is explained in terms of God's alternating victories between people in order to test them (reference Qur'an 3:140-42, 152).

⁹³ Arberry, p. 36 (Vol. II).

struggles with himself and his possessions in the path of God, such that when he meets the enemy [in battle] he fights until he is killed. This cleansing wipes away his offenses and his sins--behold the sword wipes [away] sins!--and he will be let into heaven from whatever gate he wishes... [Then] a hypocrite, who struggles with himself and his possessions in the path of God, such that when he meets the enemy [in battle] he fights until he is killed. This [man] is in hell since the sword does not wipe away hypocrisy.”⁹⁴

Both primary sources of Islam (the Qur'an and the Sunna) indicate the notion of two separate types of *jihad*. Most literature addresses the mental or spiritual *jihad* as the “greater *jihad*” and the actual fighting or warfare as the “lesser *jihad*”. Another *hadith* from the above mentioned “Kitab al-jihad” supports the distinction as follows:

“A number of fighters came to the Messenger of Allah, and he said: “You have done well in coming from the ‘lesser jihad’ to the ‘greater jihad’.” They said: “What is the ‘greater jihad’? He said: “For the servant [of God] to fight his passions.”

The Qur'an and the *Sunna* laid out the foundation for the legal doctrine of *jihad*. Scholars and legal experts from the Muslim world (and later even from the West) started to argue about the various possible interpretations, while taking hundreds of verses from the Qur'an and reliable and authentic *ahadith* into account.⁹⁵

The notion of *jihad* appeared to “change” its meaning as history took its course. The earliest interpretations of *jihad* took place during the lifetime of Muhammad. The persecution of the early Muslims in Mecca, followed by the *hijra*, the building of the first Islamic state in Medina, and the return to Mecca were all events in and around the Hijaz. They were limited in radius and dealt mainly with the “self-defense” of Islam as the new religion and faith progressed to build a wider constituency. The follow-on centuries under the reign of the early caliphs experienced a different environment. Islam became established on most parts of the Arabian Peninsula, and under the third caliph Uthman, the “expansion of Islam” gained on importance. “Damascus was captured by

⁹⁴ David Cook, “Understanding Jihad,” University of California Press, California, 2005, p. 14.

⁹⁵ Note: “Reliable and authentic *hadith*” is a subjective term in itself. Various collections are considered authentic and reliable by both Sunni and Shia, whereas those not completely crediting Ali ibn Abi Talib are more likely to get rejected by Shia. Some common collections are the al-Bukhari, al-Hajjaj, Abu Da'ud, and Ibn Maja.

635 C.E., parts of Egypt were occupied by 641 C.E., and by the time of Mu'awiyah's reign in the Umayyad dynasty, the western campaign against the Byzantine and Berber resistance had reached present-day Tunisia."⁹⁶ Expansionism brought many new aspects to the topic of *jihad*, as the radius of action increased and the lands of Arab tribes were left beyond. How to deal with Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and people of other faiths in general? What to do with women, children and elderly people during active warfare? What to do after fighting stops and new territory is conquered?

These and other important questions had to be answered in the evolution of Islamic history. The reference and basic foundation was present: the Qur'an and the Sunna, but the interpretation and implementation of both had varied with the opinions of jurists and legal experts throughout the centuries.

2. Muslim or Muslim? A Question of Quality

Ibn Taymiyyah was a scholar of Islamic law (Hanbali School) and theology. He lived in one of the most disruptive Islamic periods in which the Abbasid Empire was defeated by the invasion of the Mongols in 1258. This situation forced Taymiyyah to flee Baghdad for Damascus. The consequences of the defeat of the caliphate, and also the implications for Islam as a whole, impacted his thinking tremendously. Islam seemed to have lost its glory, which ultimately needed to be restored again. Taymiyyah was convinced that the purity of seventh century Islam was necessary to reform and renew the Islamic society of the thirteenth century. His approach was very conservative. The Qur'an and the Sunna were the foundations and gave an exemplary model for the life of a Muslim. Further, these doctrines also built the framework for the Islamic law--the *sharia*. Ruling over Muslims was to become a sensitive point for the occupying Mongols. They converted to Islam, but the law on which their ruling was based on still followed the Yasa code of law from Genghis Khan. This fact was unacceptable for Ibn Taymiyyah. He issued a *fatwa* against the Mongol rulers, who were considered "*kafirs*," or unbelievers. A Muslim ruler, who purposely does not implement Islamic law on Muslim soil was considered an apostate, and therefore an object to wage *jihad* against.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Cleveland, 2004, p. 13.

⁹⁷ Note: Compare also for contents on Ibn Taymiyyah: Esposito, John, L. "Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam," Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 2002, pp. 45-47.

Ibn Taymiyyah held the Qur'an verses 2:193 and 8:39 as the basis for his decision. There, it is stated that unbelievers must be fought "until there is no persecution and the religion is God's entirely."⁹⁸ In order to permit and motivate Muslims against the Mongol rulers, Taymiyyah referred to a series of Qur'an verses (Q. 22:39 ["Leave is given to those who fight because they were wronged--surely God is able to help them--who were expelled from their habitations without right,.."] and Q. 2:216 ["Prescribed for you is fighting, though it be hateful to you. Yet it may happen that you will hate a thing which is better for you..."])).

Ibn Taymiyyah's *fatwa* of the late thirteenth century set the precedent in giving Muslims the right to wage *jihad* against their rulers under certain preconditions. The legitimacy was constructed by using the main authority of Islam, the Qur'an. The decision to call the Mongol Muslim rulers unbelievers, however, was an interpretation based on the fact that the *sharia* was not implemented by these rulers for Islamic governance. Furthermore, it was for the first time that the quality of a Muslim was rated.⁹⁹ It was not just about being a Muslim, or a Christian; although the Mongols were Muslims; Taymiyyah stressed that their loyalty went to a greater Mongol state and the sole fact of them being Muslims was not sufficient anymore. This series of controversies was introduced by Taymiyyah for the first time in Islamic history.

3. Islam – A Matter of Purity?

Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (b. 1703 / d.1766) tried to set what is probably the most restrictive and conservative pace for Islam. His ideology and interpretation of Islam is still unique today (besides the Salafi'), an extreme ideology centered on *tawhid*.¹⁰⁰ Although it is controversial as to what the sources of Wahhab's thoughts exactly were, it is assumed that parts of his inspirations root in a "standard work of Hanbalite law dating

⁹⁸ Peters, pp. 43-47.

⁹⁹ Cook, p. 65.

¹⁰⁰ Note: *tawhid* can be translated as the "declaration of the absolute unity of God." The teachings of Wahhab focus on three parts of *tawhid*: recognition of Allah as the sole creator of the world, the simple affirmation of the divine names in the Qur'an, and the most important – directing of all worship to God alone. For comparison, see: Algar, Hamid. "Wahhabism: A Critical Essay," Islamic Publications International, Oneonta, NY, 2002, p. 31.

from the sixteenth century, the Iqna' of Hujawi (d.1560).”¹⁰¹ Also, two famous scholars, Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, are frequently noted in al-Wahhab's writings. Ibn Taymiyyah relied fundamentally on the Qur'an and the Sunna, but did not insist on any particular form of rule and order, as long as the leader and ruler were bound to the *sharia*. Al-Wahhab was different. He insisted on the Qur'an, *Sunna*, and the Sunni legal positions from the first three centuries (Hanbali madhhab) in its purest form. Wahhabi's (as followers of al-Wahhab) rejected any kind of idolatry, Sufism, and even Shi'ism as heresy and *bid'a*, which needed to be eliminated from Arabia. Al-Wahhab became linked with Ibn Saud, with whom he shared the powerbase in what was later to become Saudi Arabia. Saud served as the political leader and al-Wahhab provided the ideological and religious leadership.

In 1746, the “Wahhabi-Saud state” declared *jihad* against other Muslims, using *takfir* (declaring a Muslim as non-Muslim or unbeliever). They occupied and destroyed Karbala and its holiest sites; then they invaded Mecca and Medina in the early nineteenth century, demolishing holy Sufi places, cemeteries, tombs and anything they associated with any type of *shirk*.¹⁰² The obsession to “purify” (*tawhid*) in the strict sense of Wahhabism is not legitimated in any of the authoritative sources of Islam, which the Wahhabis so highly embrace. The use of *jihad* against Sufis and Shia, calling them unbelievers and destroying Muslim holy sites shows how they attempted to justify their *jihad*--by fighting unbelievers. However, the basis for declaring Shia and Sufi to be unbelievers is not integral to any of the authoritative sources of Islam at all.

4. The Pioneers of Islamic Revival¹⁰³

The early twentieth century certainly brought the most interesting changes in Islamic history.¹⁰⁴ The diverse political, economic and social environments at the

¹⁰¹ Quote is taken from Michael Cook, “On the Origins of Wahhabism” in Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 3rd series, 2.2 (July, 1992), pp. 191-202.

¹⁰² Note: Shirk is commonly referred to as anything associated with God; or any type of idolatry.

¹⁰³ Note: This is title of a book edited by Ali Rahnama from Zed Books Ltd, London and New Jersey from 1994.

¹⁰⁴ Note: For the purpose of this paper, the Islamic history in this chapter is geographically associated with the Middle East and closest surrounding (eastern parts of North Africa, and also Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India in the east).

beginning of the 1900s gave reason for many Islamic scholars and thinkers to critique and rethink the status quo of Islam. Subordination to the colonial powers and the continuous interdependencies of “the new independent” Arab states in the postcolonial period created frustration throughout the region. The goal for many early reformers such as al-Afghani or Muhammad Abduh was to find a golden formula in order to re-establish a united *umma* in the successful format of the seventh century Islamic society.

But Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi and Sayyid Qutb also became major ideological figures for Islamic movements and were convinced of the fact that *maktab* was capable of issuing practical solutions to problems emerging in the modern world.¹⁰⁵ They identified four primary causes for the plight of Muslims: the erosion of Islamic values, the collaboration with non-Islamic governments, the corruption of the ruling classes, and their ongoing dependence on the non-Islamic and imperialistic powers.¹⁰⁶ Despite the dissatisfaction with regimes and societies, the ideologues approach was mental and spiritual rather than violent (at least in the beginning).

Sayyid Qutb expresses, in his very controversial book *Milestones*, his aversion to the “*jahiliyya*.”¹⁰⁷ This Arabic term has generally been used to describe pre-Islamic societies exclusively for their barbaric behavior and ignorance. Qutb extended the meaning of the term to include modern societies’--Muslim and non-Muslim alike--being in a state of ignorance of the divine. “*Jahiliyya*...is one man’s lordship over another, and in this respect it is against the system of the universe and brings the involuntarily aspect of human life into conflict with its voluntary aspect.”¹⁰⁸ Qutb purposely uses the expression for Muslim and non-Muslim societies alike, insisting that the Muslim society became tainted by way of un-Islamic thoughts.

In this perspective, Qutb addresses the strategy for *jihad* on *jahiliyya* initially as spiritual and intellectual; an inner reconstruction, where the individual needs to acquaint

¹⁰⁵ Note: ‘maktab’, translated as Islamic doctrine.

¹⁰⁶ Rahnama, p. 5.

¹⁰⁷ Note: Qutb uses the term ‘jahiliyya’ for non-Muslim societies, and for Muslim societies that became tainted by ways of un-Islamic thoughts.

¹⁰⁸ Qutb, p. 46.

himself with Islam. The objective is to get Muslims, themselves, on the right path again; basically “re-Islamizing” them in their deeds and thoughts. As soon as this has been achieved, *jihad* can be more aggressive and offensive, but Qutb asserts that it will not necessarily be coercive against non-Muslims. Qutb clearly states that *jihad* has a worldwide dimension in order to spread the message of Islam, but Islam will leave it up to the people to accept or reject Islam. The reference for his ideas is taken from Qur’an verse 2:256: “No compulsion is there in religion.”

The differentiation between defensive and offensive *jihad* loses importance in Qutb’s writings. He argues that the term “defensive” is used in defeatist and apologetic forms in contemporary Muslim works. *Jihad* should be analyzed in its original condition, in which it prevailed. The Meccan period, mostly described as the peaceful period of early Islam, has its roots in the fact that it was new and needed to be structured and organized first. It was not the time to progress in an offensive manner. The period in Medina was different since a larger united constituency, in the form of an *umma*, had already been created. It was the first Islamic state, ruled with the divine “words of God.” It became the responsibility of Muslims to free the people who were ruled by humans with laws made by mankind. The usurped authority of God needed to be reinstated, according to Qur’an verse 43:84: “And it is He who in heaven is God and in earth is God; He is the All-wise, the All-knowing.” As a result, this period is known to be more militant, bellicose and politicized.

Sayyid Abu’l-A’la Mawdudi was, in large part, carrying a similar message. Islam was facing the challenge of “man-made tyranny,” when Islam should issue the call of freedom and liberation for humankind. But Mawdudi, in contrast to Qutb, had a clear blueprint of how the Islamic state and regime should look. He did not reject the notion of a state as such; however, the basis for such needed to be in accordance with the *shariat*. By emphasizing Islamic law, he committed to the vision of complete justice more than other reformers at the time, so his approach on *jihad* was less oriented toward the total supremacy of Islam, and more toward unity and equality. In this context, Mawdudi’s agenda can be categorized politically as a socialist and communist dogma.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Cook, p. 100.

B. HIZB UT-TAHRIR AND JIHAD

1. Hizb ut-Tahrir and Jihad

The resurrection of the caliphate is an imperative for Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT) and the major milestone among its multiple objectives. The group strives to topple a regime by strictly intellectual and non-violent means, preferably in the Middle East, but not exclusively. Latest expansions into Europe and Central Asia have proven how versatile and flexible HuT is--able to react in order to optimize its strategy and proceedings. Recent developments in Central Asia (Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan) indicate the success of Hizb ut-Tahrir, especially in the under-developed areas with impoverished and mostly unemployed Muslim populations. Although the resurrection of a caliphate is certainly not imminent at this time, the chances of their gaining enough support to claim a territory that would enable them to put in place a pseudo-regime, or in their words a caliph, is not improbable. The increasing support for Islamic groups throughout the Middle East (Muslim Brotherhood-Egypt, Hamas-PA, Islamic regimes in Iran and Sudan) and the increasing trend to oppose Westernization in this region of the world is sufficient argument to hypothetically discuss the intentions of Hizb ut-Tahrir after they claim some sort of power.

The notion of jihad is discussed in many of the group's website publications. Although violence is repeatedly and strictly prohibited to seize power or topple a regime, little is given in the way of alternate strategies. Hizb ut-Tahrir stresses its adherence to the Qur'an and hadith, which would, as argued in the first part of the essay, leave the group enough leeway in interpretation to wage jihad even in an offensive manner, as soon as a caliph is in place. The absence of a caliph (or Imam for the Shia) is the limiting factor, according to primary Islamic sources, in waging an offensive jihad. Jihad plays an exceptional role in the proposed "Constitution for the Islamic State," issued by Hizb ut-Tahrir in 1979.¹¹⁰ Articles 51 to 65 deal exclusively with the tasks of the Jihad Commander and the Caliph's use of the Army. A fixed command structure in the

¹¹⁰ Note: The original proposed constitution was drafted by the group's founder Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani in 1953. Shortly prior to the events in Iran in 1979, HuT presented the future Iranian leadership an updated version with the suggestion of implementation (Mudhakkira min Hizb al-tahrir hawl al-Dustur al-Irani) of this constitution. The group states that all constitution articles are derived by the process of ijthad of legal evidences from Islamic primary sources.

“Department of the Jihad Commander,” and the published “Foreign Policy” (Articles 177 to 187) indicate the emphasis of Jihad in the strategic framework of Hizb ut-Tahrir.¹¹¹ External Affairs, Military Affairs, Internal Security, and Industry departments are subordinated to the Department of Jihad. Article 185 (iii) states that countries such as England, America, France, and Russia (states which practiced colonialism) are considered states with whom to be at war.¹¹²

The evolutionary process of *jihad* interpretations throughout history has encountered various stepping stones. God’s revealed words are the beginning of Islam and the foundation for the highest written authority of Islam – the Qur’an.

Persecuted in the early seventh century, Muhammad and his growing constituency followed the divine orders primarily to defend their faith and belief, as it was born physically in the midst of two competing empires. The Byzantines in the west and the Sasanians in the east were considered a potential threat to the pre-Islamic and nomadic Arab tribes in the Arabian Desert.¹¹³ The first generation Muslims, under the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad, expanded their sphere of influence and filled the political vacuum of the Arabian Peninsula until the Prophet died in 632 C.E.

The real Islamic “expansion,” however, did not start until after Muhammad’s death. The following decades and the century to come were structured by the Islamic conquests of the Umayyads and Abbasids. Their conquests took them north into the Levant and into today’s Iraq, east into the Persian (Sasanian) empire, and finally, farther west into North Africa.¹¹⁴ The vast amount of collected material on the Prophet’s deeds and thoughts (*ahadith*) had obtained a major influence on the behavior of the Muslims. This vast amount of hadith needed to be controlled and examined for authenticity. *Ahadith* with bad *isnads* had to be sorted out.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Note: For further details, see Suha Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest: Hizb al-Tahrir and the Search for the Islamic Caliphate*, Grey Seal London, GB, 1996, pp. 193-215.

¹¹² Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest*, p. 215.

¹¹³ See Figure 1 for geographical depiction in the Appendix.

¹¹⁴ See Figure 2 for geographical depiction in the Appendix.

¹¹⁵ Note: ‘*Isnad*’ is translated as the connection of chain of transmitters of a given ‘*hadith*.’

The legitimate Islamic documentation, in the form of Qur'an verses and ahadith, offer many references to *jihad*. These references were based on either God's words or on the Prophet Muhammad's deeds, sayings, and thoughts. Their use and practical application is similar to modern law, in which interpretations of written texts play a major role. They do so because time and situation do matter, and the adaptation of sources to evolutionary processes must always be possible.

The Umayyads and Abbasids waged *jihad* in the context of going to war, mainly for reasons of expansionism. They did not encourage conversions within the newly conquered territory, partly for the reason of raising the *jizyah*, a tax to be paid by the defeated non-Muslims that constituted a major source of revenue for the extended Islamic state.¹¹⁶ Ibn Taymiyyah's interpretation was, for the first time in history, sufficient basis to attack Muslim rulers, because the Mongols, although Muslims, were not ruling in accordance with the *sharia*. The Wahhabi way of reading the prerequisites was even more extreme by rating the quality of a Muslim, with the result of waging *jihad* against Muslims not adhering to the Wahhabi standard.

Rules and regulations were applied to worldly matters that differed from those of the seventh-century Islamic world. It became more and more evident that references from the Qur'an were taken out of original context and applied to situations in which the sole recitation of verses would serve as sufficient legitimation for intended action. *Jihad* has been misused in order to motivate parts of the Muslim societies to be in favor of belligerent actions. It has seemed to become convenient for Islamic fundamentalists and leaders of such groups to purposely use the religious framework to support their cruel and unjust intentions.

The twentieth century calls from Sayyid Qutb for waging *jihad* to fight *jahiliyya* in non-Muslims societies, in Muslim rulers, and even in ordinary Muslim people who went "astray," appeared to be intellectually and literally backed by the primary sources of Islam. The interpretations of the sources of Islam and the subsequent actions of radical Islamic groups are very different. These belligerent ideologies usually do not follow a call for the intellectual and spiritual part of the *jihad* first; rather, they begin with violent

¹¹⁶ Cleveland, p. 15.

means, using random verses from the Qur'an taken out of context in support of their actions. Overall, it should be observed that *jihad*, as a legitimate core element of Islam, has been widely misused to justify warfare actions under the umbrella of Islam. It was (and even is) convenient to do so in order to persuade and motivate vulnerable elements of societies by making them believe that the action is carried out in the realm of the divine.

The differentiation between “defensive” and “offensive” *jihad* has diminished over time, as the definitions of both can be stretched intellectually, as the following quote of Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi indicates: “If you want the truth, Islamic jihad is both offensive and defensive at the same time. It is offensive because the Islamic party opposes and confronts the systems founded upon the principles that are contrary to Islam, and desires to destroy their power-and does not shrink from the use of force in order to do so-and defensive because it is compelled to construct the building of the kingdom and to reinforce its foundations so as to make possible the work in accordance with its established program and plan.”¹¹⁷

The various subjective interpretations of jihad through the centuries of Islamic history have built a foundation for extremist groups to pick-and-choose among arguments to justify warfare and violence under the umbrella of Islam.¹¹⁸ Although it is clear that Islam is neither more nor less belligerent than any other religion or civilization in the world, extremist groups are still able to recruit followers ready to carry out violence in the name and will of the divine. Many of the groups do a selective search of endorsements in the primary sources of Islam in which to ground their arguments.

It is difficult to say how Hizb ut-Tahrir will develop over time. For now, the group proceeds officially with non-violent means; however, the latest developments in Central Asia give serious reason for concern. The total HT membership amounts to 20,000 just in Central Asia, with an estimated 5,000 members only in Kyrgyzstan's

¹¹⁷ Cook, p. 101.

¹¹⁸ Note: For graphic depiction on the historic evolution of jihad, see end of chapter.

ethnic Uzbek population.¹¹⁹ Uzbekistan's assumed HT membership is even higher, considering that, according to official reports, approximately 5,000 HT members have already been arrested by Uzbek security forces, while in Tajikistan 118 additional members had been put in prison alone in 2005.¹²⁰ Many of these are claimed to be responsible for criminal acts and activities against local laws and regulations. Furthermore, internal sources of Hizb ut-Tahrir stated "that groups pledging the party their backup can use arms...if society stands against the regime its removal even by military force does not constitute an act of violence: this would be the case only if the party were to kill its opponents to arrive in power, for example."¹²¹ It finally will come down to the point of how to define violence. Hizb ut-Tahrir, clearly opposing the U.S. interest in the Middle East and elsewhere, still rejects terrorist activities and violence in America or against civilians.¹²² So it seems that the group makes a distinction between violence against civilians and "toppling a regime" by "procession to the palace or presidential residence...through a military coup executed by forces that have agreed to hand over power to the movement."¹²³

Finally it is concluded that the use of jihad, especially the offensive militant part, and also the use of violence and force is a matter of definition. Depending on the group's way of argument in the various political environments it is in, the rest of the world will have to keep a close eye on the development of its primary objective in seizing power. Should Hizb ut-Tahrir decide to apply the seventh-century model by building the Islamic state by peaceful means, the chances of toppling a regime are very low as of now. However, should they make use of more aggressive and militant splinter groups to

¹¹⁹ Note: Numbers based on the following U.S. government report, available at www.state.gov/documents/organization/65470.pdf [last accessed 24 May 2006].

¹²⁰ Note: Number of jailed Hizb ut-Tahrir members comes out of the International Religious Freedom Report 2003, released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, available at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2003/24443.htm> [last accessed on 25 May 2006].

¹²¹ Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest*, p. 104.

¹²² ICG interview, Dr. Imran Waheed, Hizb ut-Tahrir (UK) spokesperson, 5 June 2003, London.

¹²³ Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest*, p. 102.

support their actions in the concept of “nusrah,” a change in the strategic plan could evolve soon, since the pure intellectual struggle has not shown any results in the last five decades.¹²⁴

History has laid out a broad foundation for building arguments either way: to wage jihad in a spiritual, in a defensive, and in an offensive manner. Interpretations are always affected by the circumstances under which they evolve; therefore, political environments in Central Asia and the Middle East provide sufficient aggressive energy, capabilities, and fertile grounds to misuse the noble concept of jihad solely for the self-interest of extremists’ ideologies.

¹²⁴ Note: Nusrah is translated as seeking outside assistance, based on the case of the Prophet Muhammad’s assistance from Arab tribes in his conquest of Medina.

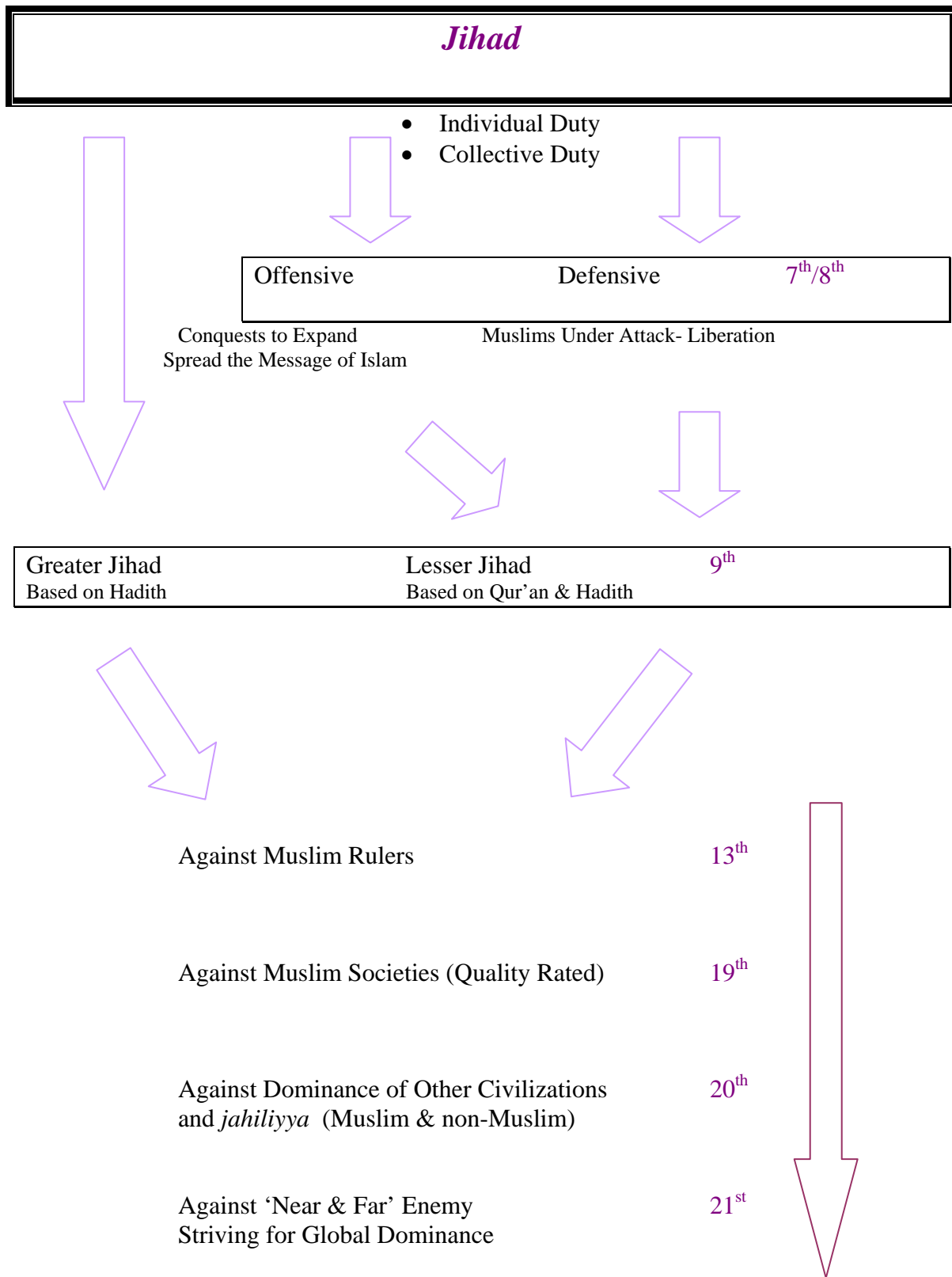


Figure 2. The Evolutionary Process of Jihad Interpretations

V. THE STATUS QUO

A. CURRENT INTERACTION WITH REGIONAL POLICIES

1. Middle East

The political organization and radical Islamic group Hizb ut-Tahrir has been banned throughout the Middle East since the early 1970s. The Middle Eastern countries consider the group to be a threat to their national security, undermining the regional leadership with an overarching goal to overthrow a government and ultimately installing the caliphate. The ban on the group and its activities forced the movement to go underground, with the consequence that over the last couple of decades very little reliable and unbiased information on the group's structure and membership count can be documented. Regional governments offer press releases on arrests and imprisonments of HT members on an irregular basis. These records indicate, besides the group's general presence in the area, that the charges pressed against HT members are mostly associated with criminal offenses. Controversial messages were published in reference to an Egyptian government crackdown on radical Islamists belonging to Hizb ut-Tahrir in April 2002. One Egyptian newspaper reported that over one hundred members of HT were arrested, while the state-run newspaper reported a count of fifty-four. Hizb ut-Tahrir's media spokesman, Dr. Imran Waheed, stated from Great Britain that only three of the men were members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, and that these men were in Egypt for educational purposes only. It was unclear what the charges against the men would be, although it is assumed that "the belonging to a clandestine and illegal organization with the goal of suspending the law and the constitution and preventing state institutions from accomplishing their goals" was reason enough to jail the accused.¹²⁵ In Syria, the membership and all activities associated with HT are illegal, and the Syrian government arrested about eight hundred political opponents from Hizb ut-Tahrir, the Muslim Brotherhood, and the pro-Iraqi Ba'th party, according to Amnesty International.¹²⁶ The list of those arrested from Hizb ut-Tahrir in Syria (2002) includes fifty-nine people, most

¹²⁵ *Middle East Times*, Summary of report, Egypt, 26 April 2002, available at www.westerndefense.org/articles/Egypt/may02.htm [last accessed 04 April 2006].

¹²⁶ Amnesty International, available at <http://t2web.amnesty.r3h.net/report2003/syr-summary-eng> [last accessed 04 April 2006].

of whom are businessman, science graduates, or even government and military affiliates.¹²⁷ Other countries, such as Jordan, Iraq, Libya, and Tunisia report similar incidents, cases and numbers.

The accusations against the group are diverse and manifold. Illegal activities, criminal affiliations, the pursuing of state-undermining objectives, and even support of militant actions against rulers and governments cover the full spectrum of reproaches, although the evidence of such is elusive and sometimes hard to prove. An open letter from Hizb ut-Tahrir to the Arab leadership represented in a meeting at Cairo in 2000 exposes the extreme hatred against the American-Israeli relationship. The letter openly calls for a rebellion and bloodshed against the “Jewish state” and the U.S. interest in the region, since the time is considered right. The Arab governments were only emplaced as puppets and obstacles by the “colonial kufirs” to prevent the unification of the umma and the eventual waging of jihad, according to the HT author of the letter.¹²⁸

The majority of information about Hizb ut-Tahrir’s activities in the Middle East is either based on isolated government reports or Hizb ut-Tahrir’s own statements concerning the analysis of Middle East politics. The group does not state any numbers for its presence in the Middle East; however, its radical and often hate-filled rhetoric against the U.S. and Western influence in the Arabian heartland leads to the conclusion that the Middle East remains the center of the party’s interest. This coincides with HT’s primary goal of establishing a caliphate, preferably in a Muslim and Arab country, and the subsequent goal of the eradication of Israel by executing jihad. The caliphate is the *sina qua non* for launching the battle, since only the caliph can call for “the liberation of the occupied land from Jewish entity.”¹²⁹ The radical rhetoric is also targeted against the

¹²⁷ Note: For complete listing of names, date of birth, and professions, see “The Syrian Committee for Human Rights” report. It is listed and published by Al-‘Adalah Issue No. 5 from October 2002. The imprisoned are kept in the Saydana prison in Syria. All were arrested shortly prior President Bashar’s coming to power in Syria.

¹²⁸ Hizb ut-Tahrir, “Offener Brief von Hizb ut-Tahrir an die an die in Kairo konferierenden arabischen Regenten,” available at http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/deutsch/leaflets/HTflts/Offener_Brief_an_Gipfel_komplett.htm [last accessed 04 April 2006].

¹²⁹ Hizb ut-Tahrir leaflet, 01 July 1982; 09 October 1990; 10 February 1988. See also leaflet from 25 February 1998 for premises of “the declaration of jihad on the Jewish state on the creation of the Khilafah state.”

Arab regimes for supporting the interests of the U.S. and Europe in the Arab and Muslim lands. Hizb ut-Tahrir only shows open presence in those countries where it is allowed or accepted. In Lebanon, Turkey, Morocco, and Palestine activities such as leaflet distribution and street demonstrations can be noticed; in Iraq, for example, HT wrote an open letter to the National Assembly in early 2005 advising them to write a constitution whose source is the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of his Messenger, and “not the US occupation.”¹³⁰

The consequent ban throughout the Middle East, with the exception of a few states (Yemen, UAE, Lebanon), forced Hizb ut-Tahrir underground decades ago. Only where accepted in “small doses” does HT indicate its presence and open opposition to the growing demands of liberty and democracy. Although the group never admitted alliance or ideological entente with any terrorist groups, it is worth noting that the practical and tactical differences are bigger than the doctrinal ones. Al-Qaeda and Hizb ut-Tahrir are both openly anti-secular, reject the boundaries and existence of modern nation-states, follow both a conservative interpretation of Sunni Islam and the divine guidance of the Prophet Muhammad, and reject any participation in the political and electoral process. The U.S. and European postcolonial influence in the sphere of the Middle East is considered by both organizations as the “evil in the region.” Neither ideology is accepted in its originating region, nor allowed to openly outline its objectives and goals. However, each differs in its respective “means to the end”--at least for now.

2. Europe

Europe appears to be a different sphere of influence for Hizb ut-Tahrir. The organization has enjoyed enough political leeway to address its ideology and methodology openly for many years throughout Europe. Europe’s request for labor and workforce in the 1970s and 1980s opened the door to the beginning of a multi-cultural society, with Muslims migrating from the Balkans to the European states farther north (to include Great Britain, Germany, Denmark, France and the Netherlands). However, the lack of social integration and limited absorption in the political and economic environment led to frustration and grievances on both sides. Frustrated and unemployed

¹³⁰ Hizb ut-Tahrir, “Khilafah Magazine International,” pp.20-21, available at <http://www.khilafah.com/home/category.php?DocumentID=11791&TagID=24> [last accessed 15 March 2006].

parts of the European Muslim population had in the meantime to deal with reversed labor markets that required fewer unskilled laborers and subsequently demanded higher entry-level qualifications. For many of the Arabic- and Turkish-speaking immigrants the demand to develop inter-cultural competence in the form of linguistic adaptation and sociopolitical-system knowledge of modern European states and societies was often unrealizable. It finally was left to the second- and now third-generation Muslims in Europe to either actively pursue the integration process, or pull back—and interact at a minimum with contemporary European societies. Widened gaps between integration and isolation led increasingly to extreme and fundamentalist views of Islamic ideologies. Radicalism and extremism, mixed with violence, are implications of such a result, and are hard to control or to suffocate.

The events of 11 September 2001 changed the procedural guidelines for fighting religiously motivated extremism and radicalism in many European countries. Germany, Netherlands, France, Italy, Spain and other influential European states altered their judicial framework to tighten the belt around these extremists' ideologies. Along with those counter-measures came the loss of freedom to openly spread Hizb ut-Tahrir's ideology . States such as Germany and the Netherlands have proscribed HT within the last years. Great Britain, however, seems to be the last major “safe haven” for Hizb ut-Tahrir, although the discussions about the outlawing of HT is gaining traction within the British government.

Great Britain is of exceptional importance for HT, since the group has its communications, and its de facto ideological, headquarter for the worldwide distribution of ideological information. Khalifah Publications, the media center of Hizb ut-Tahrir, is located on Gloucester Road, in London, GB. This center publishes all the books of HT and a majority of its digital leaflets, journals, and magazines, and also designs various websites affiliated with the group. Hizb ut-Tahrir enjoys the exact four liberal, democratic freedoms--freedom of belief, freedom of opinion, freedom of ownership, and

personal freedom--that it so categorically denounces as the “sovereignities derived by humans and responsible for the creed on which the capitalist ideology had been established.”¹³¹

British Prime Minister (PM) Tony Blair introduced a four-point plan in July 2005 with measures to increase national security. New laws against incitement and instigation of terrorism, new measures to keep those who incite hatred out of the UK or to ease their deportation, helping the Muslim community to counter the “evil” interpretations of their faith, and international efforts to mobilize the moderate and true voice of Islam are advocated by the British PM as helpful measures, recommended by the police and security services in Great Britain.¹³²

Hizb ut-Tahrir realizes the political pressure against radical, anti-governmental ideologies. Hizb ut-Tahrir claims that the British government and media use the aftermath of the July 2005 bombings in London “to sustain a climate of outrage towards the [Islamic] community, forcing them [Muslims] into a corner to concede their problems and conform to new reform measures.”¹³³ Hizb ut-Tahrir calls for all Muslims to “not succumb” to silencing; instead, they should speak up and resist the “political and media attacks” for the “disgraceful admission” of the plan to mobilize “moderate and true Muslims” by the British government. The group is convinced that it is an obligation of Islam to continuously work toward the establishment of the caliphate in order to stop wars and discontinue oppression in the Muslim lands.

Hizb ut-Tahrir’s intention to draw attention away from the political conflict and move it into cultural and religious aspects can similarly be observed in Denmark. Denmark intended to proscribe HT in 2002 after a group official advocated slogans and flyers with anti-Semitic contents, couched in verses from the Qur’an to legitimize his calls. In 2005, similar leaflets and propaganda material were distributed, calling for help

¹³¹ Hizb ut-Tahrir, *Democracy is a system of Kufr: It is forbidden to adopt, implement or call for it* (London, GB: Al-Khilafah Publications, 1995), pp.6-8, available at <http://www.khilafah.com> [last accessed 23 March 2006].

¹³² Note: For citation and complete documentation on House of Commons Hansard debate from 13 July 2005 (one week after 07 July bombings in London), see <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmhansrd/cm050713/debtext/50713-03.htm> [last accessed 07 April 2006].

¹³³ Khilafah Magazine International from August 2005, pp. 6-9.

to Muslims in Iraqi Falluja, to fight the American occupation and the regime; however, the group has still not been banned officially in Denmark to this day.¹³⁴ In regard to the inflammatory published cartoon-pictures of the Prophet Muhammad in the “Jyllands-Posten” in September 2005, Hizb ut-Tahrir argues that the Danes, and in the larger context the Europeans, were well aware of what the reactions to, and implications of, these cartoons would be. Burning flags and violence around European embassies throughout the Muslim world were “provoked” to paint the picture of “Muslims as barbarians.” It was supposedly a European act to “assassinate the character of the Rasool-Allah” in order to impose a “clash” between Christianity and Islam--between a reformed and enlightened West and an unreformed and backward Muslim world, because the liberal and free Western world would feel threatened by the notion of the reestablishment of the caliphate.¹³⁵ Politicizing religious and cultural aspects within a society had been historically an effective means to achieve political ends.¹³⁶ In a similar way, Hizb ut-Tahrir works along these lines to escape further sanctions in Europe by emphasizing that its objectives are in the realm of the divine, and therefore impossible to denounce without negating Islam as a whole. In the case of an open political opposition to HT’s “proclaimed religious goals”, the possibility of HT’s achieving greater Muslim support is likely to increase. Even moderate, nonpolitical Islamic movements may join the voice of Hizb ut-Tahrir.

3. Asia

Hizb ut-Tahrir’s presence and activities are most diverse and complex in the Central Asian--and lately in the South Asian context. The spectrum of traditional, moderate, extreme, and radical Islamic ideology can be experienced in a six-hundred-mile radius around the Fergana Valley, including the major regions of all seven

¹³⁴ “Die Tageszeitung,” issued 09 August 2005, available at <http://www.taz.de/pt/2005/08/09/a0129.1/text.ges.1> [last accessed 13 April 2006].

¹³⁵ Hizb ut-Tahrir, “Something Rotten in the State of Denmark,” 13 February 2006, available at <http://www.khilafah.com/home/category.php?DocumentID=12870&TagID=1> [last accessed 13 March 2006].

¹³⁶ Note: Gandhi successfully created an Indian nationalist movement, couched in religiously and culturally motivated aspects in order to create mass support. By doing so, he elevated the Hindus on the one hand, but at the same time he excluded the minorities such as the Sikhs and the Muslims, who felt left out, although they were Indians.

‘stans’.¹³⁷ Various classical traditions of Islam such as Sufism are indigenous to the territories, but are today overwhelmed with extremist Islamic ideologies such as Wahabbism, Deoband, and a variety of other Jihadist doctrines, to include the Taliban. Even the “terror ideology” of Al-Qaeda made its way easily into the region and threatens the reputation of Islam by couching violence and militant extremism in religious arguments.

Governments of the Central Asian states have carried out massive crackdowns on militant Islamic ideologies in the last decade. Groups such as the IMU (Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan) and Hizb ut-Tahrir are severely restricted by the new “laws on freedom of conscience and religious organizations” that limit the freedom of religious worship.¹³⁸ Even “pious Muslims can be refused permission to pray...it [became] illegal to preach Islam...[and] women could be arrested for wearing the hijab (head covering).”¹³⁹ These measures are very controversial, since the effects are felt by moderate Muslims along with those of criminal intent, giving Islamic fundamentalists the convenient counter-argument that Islam as a whole is “under attack.” This fact is especially tough on millions of Central Asian Muslims who have rediscovered their Islamic identity after decades of communist repression of all types of religious expression. As a consequence of the strong political measures, many ideologues and Islamists fled south to the neighboring Afghanistan and Pakistan region, there falling one way or the other under the influence of far more violent and militant movements such as Al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

¹³⁷ Note: The seven ‘stans’ are Tajikistan, Kyrgystan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. The Fergana Valley (between Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan) is considered a fertile area due to its natural abundance of water from the Naryn and Kara Darya rivers and its generally warm and dry climate. Fergana Valley has already been the battlefield of the 8th century, when Islam succeeded over the Tang Dynasty of China, resulting in the separation of Central Asia from China. The valley is even today still considered a highly religious and conservative region, in which the past ethnic conflicts and rivalry have played an important role in shaping its stance. Today, the valley is divided among the three above-mentioned neighboring countries and is often affected by their economic and political policies.

¹³⁸ Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad: the Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 125.

¹³⁹ Ibid, p. 125.

Hizb ut-Tahrir can be considered sympathetic to the Taliban in Afghanistan. Both groups have the idealistic vision of an Islamic state, although the Taliban strives for a poor and Spartan life on this planet. Life on earth is considered to be in preparation for the afterlife—expected to be in heaven. Hizb ut-Tahrir, on the other hand, neither denies modern technology nor modern life in general. Its spirit rather envisions a good life on earth as much as in heaven. Therefore, HT creates leverage in the impoverished and oppressed parts of the Muslim societies throughout the region. It intends to demonstrate how repressively the Central Asian governments act on Islam as a whole, although the party's objectives are less religious than genuinely political in nature. Under the guise of Islam, HT hides its political and socio-economic intentions to attract sympathizers and followers of its kind. Hizb ut-Tahrir distributes its propaganda material and leaflets mostly in local languages, and holds meetings and study circles in private homes to mask itself from government persecution. Up to the present day, hardly any credible evidence can be found that HT is involved in any violent or militant activities to extend its sphere. Criminal acts of individual HT followers have been reported throughout the region, but not in a way that the organization of HT could be held responsible for. Hizb ut-Tahrir in Central Asia has so far followed its international and almost global motto of the non-violent, pure Islamic ideology. However, the imprisonment and reported torture of jailed HT members will not just strengthen the group's urge to topple a regime, but could likely increase the threat of using violence as a counter-measure to the governments' use of excessive force.

B. THE WAY AHEAD

1. The Application of the Strategic Choice Method

Radical Islamic groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir use the liberal freedom of speech and freedom of opinion to propagate their extremist ideologies. The tools of modern democracies allow and enable non-violent extremist ideologies to disseminate propaganda freely and almost uncontrollably. The threshold of executing violence and other unacceptable activities, such as the distribution of anti-Semitic propaganda, are not likely to be crossed by Hizb ut-Tahrir, making the spread of its core ideology subsequently more difficult to contain for modern nation-states. The group increasingly limits its ideological exposure to advocating the caliphate as a divine and religiously

generated message of Islam, therefore theoretically only to be denied through an open confrontation with Islam itself. In Great Britain, Hizb ut-Tahrir extended its leverage successfully by use of this means, making it more difficult for the British government to proscribe the group for good. Attempts to do so will generate religious and cultural opposition from Muslims throughout the country—equivalent to the “cartoon incidents” in Denmark.

Suppression and repression of HT in Central Asia and the Middle East have had a different impact on the party’s proceedings. While HT in these regions is not able to promote its doctrine openly without endangering its members, it has chosen to act clandestinely and in a secretive manner. Links and connections to more-violent groups are not proven, although credible information indicates that the group has had an increasing connection in Asia to the Taliban and the IMU.¹⁴⁰ So far, these connections have been based on a shared ideology, as the Taliban and the IMU likewise build on a Deobandi-Wahabbi tradition, which foresees seizing power as a prerequisite to imposing sharia law in order to finally transform society. The tactics used to achieve their objectives, however, differ greatly between these groups. The Taliban and IMU ignore the use of the greater jihad and have chosen the violent and militant option as the method of choice, whereas Hizb ut-Tahrir sticks closer to its advocated “seventh-century model of the Prophet Muhammad,” that preferred the method of the lesser jihad first.

Up to this point, it seems that “Hizb ut-Tahrir–Bangladesh” has opted for one of the best possible strategies in proceeding. The party branch in the South Asian region chose an exceptionally smart approach of selling itself in Bangladesh, which gives the current media and publicity secretary Mustafa Minhaj reason to believe in “succeeding one day” in Bangladesh.¹⁴¹ Both mainstream secular parties in Bangladesh are accused by its population of being corrupt and responsible for the political and economic misery of the three-decade-old state, while the majority of Islamic parties in the country generally are associated with militancy and political violence. Hizb ut-Tahrir, on the other hand, ensures that its image stays clean as the “non-violent, success-promising, and pure Islamic ideology,” which can hardly be denounced by any of the local rivals. In a

¹⁴⁰ Khamidov, pp. 8-10.

¹⁴¹ Rahman.

country with a 90% Muslim population, it is almost impossible to reject the “strict Islamic way of life” without denouncing Islam as a whole. Obviously, the party would never get the ideological support from the remaining 10% Hindus in Bangladesh, nor from the few *Shia*, who mainly reside in the urban areas of Bangladesh; but, this stance still gives HT a solid base to work from. On top of this fact, HT’s methodological promise of not using violence at any point to seize power gives the party additional legitimacy and allegiance—at least on an ideological basis.

In Bangladesh, HT follows a four-step approach to advance its cause. First, the people’s confidence needs to be earned through a continuous political process. This is undertaken by a steady presence in the streets of Dhaka, Chittagong, and other powerful centers of Bangladesh. Hizb ut-Tahrir distributes leaflets that address current economic and political events as proof of the failure of the current ideology in Bangladesh. Headlines such as “Only the Khilafah State can ensure your economic security,” “Our rulers watch the slaughter of the Muslims in Iraq,” and “Islam is the only permanent solution to crime and corruption in society,” are used to denounce liberal democracy and free-market economy as the evil, where the Khilafah State (i.e. caliphate) is held forth as the harbinger of success for Bangladesh.¹⁴² Hizb ut-Tahrir organizes seminars and open discussions in public and private universities, and also near cafes and other youth centers near mosques. These actions lead directly to the second part of the four-pronged approach in Bangladesh, which is called the “mobilization of a people’s movement.” Mustafa Minhaz, the media and promotions secretary of Hizb ut-Tahrir Bangladesh compares the party’s proceeding in this matter to the leftist student movement during the 1960s and 1970s. “The key element in their success [was] the ability to galvanize a large support base within university students...they first engaged the intellectually aspiring students...[who] in turn...attract a larger mass.”¹⁴³ Private universities such as Independent University Bangladesh, East West University, American International

¹⁴² Note: The addressed headlines are all headers from electronic leaflets accessible through the group’s website in Bangladesh. Most of these electronic resources are available in Bangla and English language, available at <http://www.khilafat.org/newPages/Leaflets/leaflets.php?PHPSESSID=0f539b0666c4101146ef2811657e1404> [last accessed 18 April 2006].

¹⁴³ Mahfuz Sadique, “Hizb ut-Tahrir: Islam’s new face in Bangladesh,” available at <http://www.hizb.org.uk/int/index.php?id=3070> [last accessed 17 April 2006].

University Bangladesh, City University and Southeast University are central promoting and recruiting fields to win hearts and minds of young and intelligent students, who are expected to be of financial and organizational benefit for Hizb ut-Tahrir in times to come.¹⁴⁴ The third and the fourth steps in Bangladesh deal with toppling the regime and the existing system of governance, followed by the election of a caliph through the participation of the people. The slow infiltration of the country through the body of universities is a strategy that will take time and patience. A mass of students and educated will get entrenched over time, who will eventually be able to financially, organizationally, and intellectually support the projected “transformation of Bangladesh’s society.” This is the theory of Hizb ut-Tahrir; however, the practical application of such will have to survive many obstacles along the way.

Hizb ut-Tahrir makes use of a “strategic choice” approach in accordance with the environment in which it is acting. In liberal, democratic European societies, HT advocates its political opposition in an open manner. The party religiously motivated elements in its arguments, with the intention to create mass support among the Muslim populations. It uses every legally permissible means to further its ends. The otherwise categorically rejected “humanely derived” laws and regulations of a modern democracy are well-known to the party’s leaders, and in case of any attempt by European governments to proscribe the party (such as in Denmark or Germany), the organization will use its precise knowledge of modern law to counter-argue a ban. In more repressive and autocratic environments such as in Central Asia, Hizb ut-Tahrir changes the strategy and hides its political objectives behind a religious façade. Attacks and crackdowns on the group are portrayed as attacks on Islam in order to obtain continuous support by the Muslim population, while at the same time linkages to suspicious Islamic organizations and violent-Islamist are becoming increasingly hard to detect. Last, but certainly not least, HT operates at the most secretive level within its original sphere of where the group was founded—the Middle East. Besides a few governmental and Human Rights Watch reports, little information is obtainable about the current status of membership and activities in the Middle East. As different states and regions react differently to the

¹⁴⁴ Sadique.

presence and ideology of this Islamic fundamentalist party, it becomes evident that the question of proscribing Hizb ut-Tahrir becomes more and more central for every contemporary government.

2. Proscription and Its Implications

The above-average recruitment of members of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Great Britain and Denmark is noted and observed with concern by European governments. Official observers closely follow the developments in Germany, where the group has been legally proscribed. Will Germany really be the “in situ” case of where to draw the line between freedom of expression, radical propaganda, and illegality?

An official from the German National Intelligence Service stated in a March 2006 interview that the ban on Hizb ut-Tahrir will make the party disappear in people’s consciousness, prevent open recruiting and also withdraw the group’s assets to financially secure itself through public donations and the like.¹⁴⁵ He also maintains that the official abandonment will send a strong signal to likeminded groups and organizations that have chosen similar ideologies and activities.

The structure of the group will weaken as a consequence of such actions; however, the spread of HT’s ideology, especially through the internet, will be hard to contain. Websites that obtain the ideological works of Hizb ut-Tahrir and its founder al-Nabhani are for the most part not registered in Germany; instead, the group uses accounts and domains in foreign countries, where its administrative registration of websites is not illegal. The group also owns forums and chat rooms, in which idealistic Islamic ideology is advocated and praised. Sympathizers can here freely exchange information, resulting in increased loyalty, allegiance and eventual recruitment. Now, since the quarterly journal “Explizit” is off German streets, and sympathizers of HT are unable to propagate radical rhetoric freely without facing criminal charges, it still remains to be seen how the ideas of these fundamentalist can be successfully contained.

¹⁴⁵ Note: The author of this thesis interviewed Dr. Helmut Albert, the *Director of the National Intelligence Service of the Federal German State Saarland*, on 23 March 2006.

VI. CONCLUSION

A. RESEARCH SUMMARY

In over five decades of existence, Hizb ut-Tahrir has proven to be a highly secretive transnational Islamic fundamentalist group that has continuously expanded its sphere of presence. Born in the mid 1950s in the former territory of Palestine, the party quickly expanded into neighboring countries and eventually throughout the Middle East. The group had encountered a tactical stalemate in the Middle East by the 1970s, after several failed coups in Iraq, Syria, and Jordan. An extension into Europe and Central and South Asia was noted in the 1980s and 1990s, aided by Europe's less-constrictive immigration requirements and Asia's political opening after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Today, Hizb ut-Tahrir is assumed to be either legally or illegally present in over forty countries, to include the United States, Australia, and even some regions of Africa.

Besides the masses of biased information issued by the group itself, only a few scholars and journalists have managed to obtain reliable and precise data on party membership, group size, funding and underground activities. The collection of worldwide open source data of HT members and jailed HT members clearly indicates that the majority and heavy corps can be associated with the Central Asian region. This region deals with an estimated 20,000 Hizb ut-Tahrir members, while the European strongholds (Great Britain, Germany, Netherlands, and Denmark) possibly face less than 2,500 members.¹⁴⁶ A membership count throughout the Middle East region; however, would be more than just a rough guess and is, therefore, spared out at this point. Information from individual members through interviews is hardly available, and even if available can only be associated with the local--and lowest--level of the group's structure.

¹⁴⁶ The numbers reflect an estimate based on a collection of existent 'open source' data about HT members and jailed HT members worldwide. Germany deals with an estimated 150 HT members according to the National Intelligence Service Reports from 2003 and 2004; Denmark and the Netherlands can be considered with a similar amount, based on individual country and media reports. Great Britain probably holds the lion's share in Western Europe. According to a BBC News report, 8,500 people attended an HT conference, paying an admission of five Pounds (equivalent to about US \$8). Available at <http://www.militantislammonitor.org/article/id/58> [last accessed 25 May 2006] Although this number can not be representative for the amount of actual members, however, a deflection can certainly be done along with the knowledge that the ideological and media headquarters of the group are located in London, GB.

As a consequence of such, these statements mostly refer to local problems and conditions for the individual's respective country and rarely reflect more than provincial-level information. Hizb ut-Tahrir has been able to remain so secretive mainly due to two important factors. One is the intentionally highly centralized hierarchical structure. Groups and internal cells have no more than five to eight members and parallel structures and cells have no reciprocal knowledge of each other. Command and reporting lines of communications are strictly vertical, enabling only the higher command level to grasp the complete magnitude of the organization's extent. Local cells and individual members live and breathe HT ideology in small groups, unknowing and unaware of other parallel cells. "Intrusions" by intelligence services are hardly possible, because the small groups' members know each other well, and even live their lives so closely that only long-term "implants" would be able to gather valuable information. Secondly, the structural framework of the organization also enforces a "need-to-know" policy for individual cells and members. Only group- or cell-relevant information gets channeled down through the command tree, which allows selective control over specific cell activity without informing any other parallel level. Consequently, the chances of success for a secret cell activity increase, while at the same time, invulnerability for the upper command and the overall survivability of the party is ensured.

The downside of every secretive structure such as Hizb ut-Tahrir's is the problem of creating mass support. The longer that activities, member security, and protection of the organization remain the primary goals, the harder it will be to demonstrate transparent and accountable political alternatives to those who are opposed to the current systems. This is exactly how Hizb ut-Tahrir's stage-two stagnation of its own agenda is caused. Stage one can be considered complete, as an educated cadre and a political structure have been built. The organization has settled in its structure and undertaken a series of enterprises in the various continents. Stage two, however, was designed to reach out to the rest of society, to achieve mass support and contacts to powerful people of bureaucracies and even politicians, in order to bring about the "peaceful and intellectual" overthrow of an existing government in stage three. The secretive structure and often clandestine undertakings of Hizb ut-Tahrir prevent this needed support and popularity.

The second difficult issue in addressing the masses lies in the fact that Hizb ut-Tahrir rejects any kind of participation in the electoral process. Rejecting democratic elections and secular political systems as a whole leaves the party as an outsider of modern societies and state structures. Any person's full commitment to the group would make him leave the public arena, a step that a majority of Muslims is not ready to take. As a matter of fact, the majority is seeking to enter the public sphere and strives to achieve open political representation. Islamists such as the Muslim Brotherhood, and even HAMAS, a political party that is categorized as a terror organization by the United States and the European Union, have chosen to enter the political process in order to advance their efforts. Historical evolution and facts on the ground have persuaded many Islamic groups to advocate their ends with means that are accepted by modern societies. Hizb ut-Tahrir, however, is one of the last Islamic organizations that continues to believe in the success of a seventh-century model--the caliphate--ignoring the facts of today's people's demands and ambitions.

B. THREAT ASSESSMENT

This thesis has introduced three different regions in which Hizb ut-Tahrir is active. In all of these, HT demonstrates exceptional local knowledge of political structures and procedures. By choosing a strategy that best fits the regional political environment, HT manages to survive as an organization while it is still able to appear as a non-violent Islamic group. The widespread rhetoric of being a radical Islamic group can only be upheld by the group's ideological intent to "radically" change the system of governance in terms of changing such in a revolutionary, although peaceful, manner. Hizb ut-Tahrir's ideology strives for a sequence of seizing power first, and then transforming the society, while most other Islamic organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood prefer grassroots activities to transform a society first, with which it is trying to achieve a physical majority in order to take power as a follow-on step. This fundamental difference has tremendous implications. Groups that undertake grassroots activities such as delivering social goods (i.e., water, food, shelter, and electricity) to portions of the society that are underprivileged or just have been forgotten by their current regimes are mostly transparent and controllable. Social deficits caused by political imperfections become evident and can be counterbalanced by current regimes

through the political system and its administration with the effect of suffocating Islamists' arguments, assuming that the government really tries to compensate for this lack of social goods. In the case of Hizb ut-Tahrir, the process is more complex. First, the party denounces all contemporary political systems and offers no basis for a political discussion. Caliphate or "kufr-system" is a lot like "being with us or against us." Hizb ut-Tahrir rejects compromises with modern regimes and continuously denounces any active participation in current state systems. Secondly, Hizb ut-Tahrir does not remedy defects and political imperfections. The group has never helped any local population to restore sewage, water, electricity or the like, activities that are done by many Islamists throughout the Middle East in order to compensate for the lack of government responsibility. These facts make the threat of Hizb ut-Tahrir's Islamic fundamentalism primarily ideological and in some ways inviolable.

Hizb ut-Tahrir uses the liberal western-style democratic freedoms of speech and religion as the basis to spread its Islamic ideology worldwide, through modern media tools such as the internet. Web pages are offered in multiple languages as required, and are registered in countries that allow listings by Hizb ut-Tahrir. In Germany, for example, although the group has been officially banned since 2003, a German-articulated HT website is still accessible. The site is not registered in Germany, which does not make a difference for the targeted German-speaking audience that still has access to the group's ideology in their language. The internet site <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org> lets the visitor select the German language as one of many options, while the website's registrar "Network Solutions" is located in Herndon, Virginia-USA.¹⁴⁷ Great Britain is used as the platform where ideologues such as Dr. Imran Waheed, other high-ranking HT leadership, and the group's complete media centre are located. But, as long as Hizb ut-Tahrir does not clash with British laws it does not face proscription, which means that HT will continue to walk a fine line in spreading its anti-Semitic propaganda, thus ensuring its continued legal presence in Great Britain. Extremist rhetoric against Israel, Great

¹⁴⁷ Note: Information is based on "Haganah Database" available at <http://haganah.org.il/jihadi/HuT.html> [last accessed 05 May 2006] The DNS service provider is ZoneEdit, Inc., New York, NY, USA. Registrant is Hizb ut-Tahrir, Al-Khilafah Publications, Suite 298, London, UK.

Britain, and the U.S. that goes beyond allowed rules in Great Britain is mostly left to the South Asian media centers (i.e., Bangladesh) and websites that face less local challenge and no persecution.

Central Asia has developed into Hizb ut-Tahrir's main recruiting field in terms of foot soldiers. The group clearly addresses there the lower class, less educated, and mostly unemployed and frustrated Muslim in order to create mass support. Connections and linkages to criminal and terror groups keep damaging the non-violent reputation of the transnational organization, resulting in a categorization of Hizb ut-Tahrir as an insurgent group by the Central Asian governments. The name of Hizb ut-Tahrir is more and more used along with other radical extremist and violent groups such as the IMU, the Taliban, or even al-Qaeda affiliates. Central Asian territorial borders have diminished in terms of the spread of Islamists' ideology, and followers can now be found throughout the 'stans', with a center of gravity in the Fergana Valley region and Uzbekistan. The Central Asian republics' hopes and expectations for economic power, political influence and financial wealth due to major gas and oil reserves in the region remained mainly unfulfilled due to the region's landlocked position--between China, Russia, and portions of the larger Middle East. The "New Great Game" has started, but mainly among the great powers and economies of China, Great Britain, and the U.S., who determine the flow of gas, oil, and money.¹⁴⁸ Local governments, on the other hand, mainly battle drugs, crime, corruption, and various Islamists' ideologies that fortunately remain largely disunited—at least for now. Governments react oppressively against Islamists to maintain the upper hand, but are not strong enough to keep the loyalty and allegiance of their impoverished populations through authoritarian governance. Each of these states fights various alliances of Islamist groups that struggle for power. Also, the threat in the region can likewise to the European threat be considered an ideological, daily business; however, this indicates more and more crime and violence that comes with the religiously motivated extremists. Violent responses to the use of excessive force by the governments

¹⁴⁸ Note: the "New Great Game" is a term used by author Ahmed Rashid in his book "Taliban." The phrase refers to the interdependencies of politics, economics and inter-state relations between the fairly new independent republics of Central Asia, and the major political and economic powers such as Russia, China, Great Britain, Iran, and even Turkey. Major gas and oil reserves in the Central Asian territory and projected pipelines routings out of the landlocked region create a complex political interdependency among all players.

and state security apparatuses are increasingly observed by repressed Islamists. “The fear is that young HT militants, who now face the same indiscriminate repression and poverty at home as IMU militants, may soon ignore their elders’ advice and turn to guerilla warfare.”¹⁴⁹ The Central Asian dilemma has turned into a vicious circle, in which the governments use force and repression to suffocate Islamists’ ideologies and Islamists use violence in return. Smaller Islamic groups and minorities face tough state-executed crackdowns and the possibility of likeminded ideologies uniting for the sole tactical benefit of opposing authoritative regimes increases steadily.

The Middle East threat assessment might be the hardest one to do. Decades-long abandonment and underground work allows for little reliable analysis on where Hizb ut-Tahrir stands in this region. Government reports, messages by Human Rights Watch, and statements by HT itself appear only as short blips on the radar. Continuous and useable data can only be obtained and analyzed in the countries that allow Hizb ut-Tahrir unlimited presence. These are a minority, and especially the countries of HT’s origin (such as the former Palestine region and the neighboring Jordan, Syria, and Iraq) repeatedly executed major crackdowns on the group. Intelligence services of the respective countries may have obtained better and more detailed information, but the sharing of such is so limited that a useful regional analysis is rarely possible.

The assessments of threat and status quo in the three main emphasis regions of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East have demonstrated several important points. For one, the threat of Hizb ut-Tahrir is not just international, but transnational. Geographical borders do not exist for the major threat of this group—its ideology. The group’s vision of reestablishing the caliphate as the harbinger for success and glory for Muslims worldwide has been nurtured and maintained in Great Britain for over two decades now. Liberal democratic state structures and regulations allowed HT to spread this anti-secular and modern nation-state undermining philosophy worldwide by the use of modern information technology such as the World Wide Web. Geographical borders are excluded in this virtual world, where ideas and thoughts travel faster than the forces that are trying to capture those. A Hizb ut-Tahrir spokesman for Jordan and an official chief

¹⁴⁹ Rashid, p. 132.

coordinator of HT in Bangladesh are both able to line up their statements in accordance with their headquarters' demands within minutes. As a consequence of such, ideology is getting refined and standardized for all local branches of Hizb ut-Tahrir—be they in Europe, the Middle East, or Asia.

Secondly, the study elaborated the primary threat of these Islamic fundamentalists, which is its core ideology of establishing a caliphate. This ideology not just opposes, but categorically rejects any contemporary form of state governance. Hizb ut-Tahrir discards these as un-Islamic for being derived by humans and not by their creator. The group does not offer any type of political compromise, in contrast to almost all other Islamist ideologies. Even Hamas in the former Palestine region and the Muslim Brotherhood across the Middle East have joined in political processes that account for voices of the population and ballot boxes alike. Facts on the ground such as inter-state relationships based on political and economic commonalities have created a net and a global structure that is threatened by an ideology that strives for an all-exclusive Muslim dominance. The right of existence of the state of Israel is categorically denied, and countries such as the U.S., Britain, France, and Russia are considered to be “at war” with Islam. There can not be peace with those states, based on HT’s political agenda, which has been manifested in its proposed constitution for an Islamic state since the 1950s. Only one other transnational group envisions the same body of thought—al-Qaeda. As elucidated in an earlier chapter of this thesis, al-Qaeda likewise favors the resurrection of a worldwide caliphate to defeat the “Western and imperialistic hegemonial” structures of the U.S. and the West. Both groups couch political objectives in religious rhetoric and arguments in order to achieve support from Muslims worldwide. Both groups also push toward a voice of a “clash of civilizations” between a “Muslim civilization” and the “kufr” civilization. Up to this day, they fortunately differ in their respective means to achieve the proclaimed ends. While al-Qaeda uses militant violence in the form of deadly acts against civilians and military alike, Hizb ut-Tahrir follows a non-violent path in accordance with its documented methodology. Political repression and the use of excessive force against members of Hizb ut-Tahrir in the Middle East and in Asia give more and more reason for concern that its followers will respond with militancy and violence in kind. Repressive Central Asian governments do not differentiate enough

between the various violent and non-violent Islamic ideologies; therefore, frustrated non-violent fundamentalists will eventually be forced to react with militant violence in a form of self-defense.

C. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Different regions and different political state structures have created different countermeasures against Hizb ut-Tahrir. All worked in some way, but none of them was able to contain the phenomenon as a whole. Liberal, non-restricting policies enable the unrestricted spread of the group's anti-secular ideology. Ironically, the ideology that HT rejects the most gives the party the best forum to propagate itself. Hizb ut-Tahrir uses freedom of speech to promulgate its own goals and freedom of religion to advocate the caliphate as the method of choice to overcome greed and inequality within contemporary systems of governance. However, the proposed end state projects the exact opposite, in which Islam is to become the exclusive religion with all other religions being subjugated and inferior to Islam. As a result of these issues, more and more European governments have decided to opt for an official proscription of HT. The bans undertaken by Germany, the Netherlands, France, and other Europeans were mostly responses to tighten security measures since September, 11th 2001. The party was forced to go underground and intelligence services are trying to keep their eyes on developments below the radar. At this point, it is important to analyze and compare HT's history and development in its context within the Middle East. While HT was banned there more than five decades ago, the long-term results in the Middle East are far more representative than the less than five-year-old bans in Europe. The long-term political banning in most Middle East countries indicates that major group structures have been fractured and demolished down to the regional level, or even further to break local cell structures. Most of the countries were also able to contain the group's ideology; however, this was at a time in which information exchange and communication could not be handled in real-time. Modern nation-states have to be aware of the fact that modern communication technology, to include cell phone, satellite and internet, has bridged the gap of relaying and exchanging information and ideology within minutes—worldwide. But even besides the factor of spreading ideology, the banning of physical groups creates dark holes that expand over time. Individual governments of a region lose monitoring

capability on developments underground. Only the respective intelligence and security services might be able to track some underground activity; however, in a secretive structured party such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, means might be limited to maintain a solid picture on developments and growth over longer periods of time.

But there are more lessons in reference to proscription. Banning a group is like fighting the symptom of a disease, but not the cause. Hizb ut-Tahrir was born in the midst of a turbulent time in the Middle East, and the persecution of the group was the first solution on hand for the governments at the time and easier than fixing the root problem. The foundation of the Islamic party Hizb ut-Tahrir must clearly be seen as an Islamic response to the military led nationalist regimes of the 1950s. The failure of state-led nationalism and leftist socialism in the region provoked an Islamic response among many of the Arab-Muslim population throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Islamic ideologies of thinkers such as Hasan al-Banna and Seyyid Qutb were often the motor for group formations that encapsulated violence and militancy. Al-Nabhani's ideology on the other hand resulted in the formation of Hizb ut-Tahrir, which clearly separated itself from these methodologies by proceeding with non-violent means. Over five decades later, HT still keeps up its non-violent doctrine as a symbol of its Islamic ideology. If modern secular states fight all Islamic groups, violent and non-violent alike, with one medication, the side-effects and unintended consequences can be expected to be single-minded, as well. Non-violent groups are likely to deviate from certain paths of self-proclaimed methodologies and respond with force in order to sustain themselves. This could be done by building splinter groups to handle violent responses, as well as by building coalitions with bigger and more experienced Islamists groups that already follow the militant path. Since liberal toleration such as in Great Britain, banning such as in the Middle East, and repression such as in Asia are all evidently double-edged swords, other and more complex solutions should be taken into consideration as well.

The first and probably most complex undertaking should be the containment of Hizb ut-Tahrir's ideology that undermines all systems of state governances worldwide. This is of exceptional importance, as the spread of the ideology is the fuel for keeping the flame alive and has proven lately to be immune against physical proscription of the group's legal presence in a country. The immunity has grown out of the technological

progress of exchanging information and communication in modern times. In order to stop the spread of ideology, a combined effort among modern nation-states and their security apparatuses must be undertaken. As long as Hizb ut-Tahrir is able to register its internet pages in the U.S. or Great Britain, outlawing the group in Germany, the Netherlands, and other influential European countries does not eliminate the ideological threat. Suffocation of such is only possible if all states opposing the “caliphate as the governance of choice” agree on one common denominator and enforce regulations that restrict both website usage and registrations that undermine current state laws and constitutions. In such a case, a comprehensive international shutdown of HT’s internet sites would be achievable, which could substantially influence the standardized and quick-spreading ideology.

But there are other measures that are less about policing and more about curing. Integration and education are two key elements for increased state-society interaction and involvement. These two measures are of benefit for the state and its institutions as much as for the individual to be integrated. Wounds of the limited integration of Muslim societies and their Islamic values within the Middle East (1960s), Europe (1980s), and Central Asia (1990s) are still felt today and remain uncured. Governments in all three regions have to focus on the problems of Muslim societies in their respective state- and social systems. Cultural acceptance and tolerance on one side, combined with the promise of equal opportunities in upward mobility within social structures on the other side, would limit frustration and “rejectionism” as a basic opposing attitude. It would in return create more responsibility on the side of the person to be integrated, as primary arguments of betrayal, inequality, and inferiority would diminish. Integration and education efforts must go hand in hand. To enhance tolerance and cultural adaptation among current societies, it becomes important that the various moderate forms of Islam are supported, while the radical, extreme, and non-tolerant ideologies are firmly rejected.

In conclusion, it must be noted that Hizb ut-Tahrir has not been able to create mass support in any region in the 50 years of its existence. This is mainly due to the fact that a majority of Muslims do not favor any kind of caliphate, whose idealistic success can objectively be narrowed down to the 32-year reign of the Prophet Muhammad and the first four caliphs. It is highly likely that most lower class and uneducated followers

and sympathizers of HT would give up the caliphate concept in exchange for better integration within the existing social and political networks of modern states. The notion of the caliphate is mostly to be seen as a phenomenon that was re-created in the last century as an alternative to other multiple failed Islamic ideologies. Facts on the ground, and the economic success and wealth of some current HT leaders lead to the overall assumption that most of the upper class and educated HT members today have already assimilated well into modern society and state structures. They are well established, with sufficient wealth to support the party financially. So, what is left at the end is the main critique of an often-perceived betrayal and inferiority of the Muslim population, which can only be corrected with a combined effort by current state regimes and affected Muslims alike.

An influx for the Islamic fundamentalist group of Hizb ut-Tahrir is hard to project and will depend greatly on the current political events associated with the ‘Global War On Terror’. Islamic fundamentalists often misuse this war as an attack on Muslims and Islam; so it is more than ever before that this battle is for “the hearts and minds” of the Muslim populations worldwide.

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